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The
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PREFACE.

It is now many years since the Author of these Children's Sermons was impressed with the importance of endeavouring to lead the young to take more interest in the services of the Church. To speak to them in language that requires a strained attention soon wearies ; to excite attention, and give them an interest in what they already know, is not difficult, when we adapt our language to their capacity. To do this was the author's object, that they might enter the house of God with joy and

vi.

quit it with regret, rather than run from it as from a prison.

No doubt the same truths here set forth are commonly taught both at Sunday schools and in the bosom of private families ; but this does not attach the young to the Church, as to a place where they delight to meet for prayer and for the hearing God's word. On the contrary, most of us are painfully conscious of the inattention manifested by children of even well regulated Sunday schools during the services of prayer : it requires the vigilant superintendence of their masters, and of teachers or monitors, to maintain both the flagging attention and the discipline necessary to prevent annoyance to the congregation ; whilst all attempt at listening to the sermon is abandoned. Of course there are exceptions to such a condition of things, and, in some few schools, the author has seen most creditable notes of sermons, the un-

aided production of those under instruction ; but then it has been confined to the elder children ; it is obvious that it cannot be general. Yet the elementary truths of the Gospel are within the grasp of very young minds ; the histories of the Bible are full of interest to them : why should we fail of arresting their attention ? It is an acknowledged difficulty among all classes ; and if the style of preaching is such as an adult congregation has a just right to expect, it always will be a difficulty.

To meet it, some clergymen have had recourse to the older custom of publicly catechising, and have substituted it for a sermon. Much information may be elicited by this means, and imparted to the congregation as well as to the children : but where such a plan is practicable it may not be always advisable.

Others have appointed services exclusively for children ; and in the American Episcopal Church,

particularly at Boston, churches have been built expressly for children, and set apart solely for their use. This is inconsistent with our habits; but there can be no objection to services held specially for children, making them the objects of instruction, without excluding others who may desire to be present. This the author has tried as well as the catechising. As the separate service seemed the most likely to carry out his object, he determined to adopt it.

He first began with a few little ones in the infant school, using an abridgment of the Liturgy, and sometimes one of Wilson's excellent "Sermons to Children." The attention they paid, he may say the delight they showed, encouraged him to attempt a separate service during the summer evenings in the Church, at an hour when nothing need interfere with their attendance, in hopes of exciting a more general interest among the children

of his little parish. The plan succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectation ; all was life and attention.

The novelty has passed away, but the interest has not diminished, and it is comparatively seldom that a listless countenance or a weary eyelid is seen among the children, whilst superintendence is almost superfluous. They feel that the prayers are their prayers ; and the beautiful language of our Liturgy never sounds more sweetly musical, nor the hymns more devotional, than when poured forth in response or melody from the lips of these little ones. The author thinks also that their hearts are more ready to receive instruction, and that they gain habits of attention, as they perceive that it requires little stretch of understanding to grasp the meaning of what is preached. They are thus prepared to give heed to deeper truths as they grow older.

X.

The simple lectures that are now put forth are published at the request of some friends, with a view, not of eliciting approbation for them, but of calling more attention to the subject of "Children's Churches," in which the young may be trained as our fellow worshippers, rather than be the weary listeners they commonly are, or, what is worse, an hindrance to the devotions of others. They are conversational in their character, and were perhaps even more so when delivered. In proof that they interested the children to whom they were preached, the author was assured from various quarters that they could scarcely refrain from answering the questions put to them. He hopes, therefore, that other children, or the more illiterate poor, may be also interested in reading them. The domestic circle on the Sabbath evening will afford scope for further questions, as well as admit of answers from the young hearers, and the me-

mory of such instruction from the hallowed lips of a parent will perhaps be long cherished in after life, and be regarded after that which suggested them has perished from the mind.

Reader, whosoever thou art, add thy prayer for a blessing on the instruction given in the children's Church.

RECTORY, W. TUDERLY.

Oct. 20.

The Book.

GEN. i. 1.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

I DARE say, my little children, you have often read these words, and yet have not thought much about them ; but if you know what they mean, you know more than many men, who have been called both great and wise in times past, have been able to find out. They unfold to us a great secret when they tell us that " God created the heaven and the earth."

It is very sad to think how many people there have been in God's world who have lived and died without knowing anything about Him. And there are still many who are ignorant of Him; some because they have never heard of Him, and some because they do not like to keep Him in mind! Yet he is very good, and is always doing good to us; we could not live or move without Him, so that it seems strange that any one should forget Him. But, my children, if we had not the Bible, we should know as little about God as the poor heathen do: nay, though we have it, it too often happens that He is not in our thoughts.

Do you know why it is called the Bible? It is so kind of God to give it to us! But why is it called the Bible? I will tell you. "Bible" means "book." The Bible is the book which God has given us to read, to learn, to think about. It is "the book" that tells us what we ought to do, what we ought to pray for, what

we ought to hope for. Other books *may* be true, my children, but the Bible is "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." From the first verse, which tells you that "God created the heaven and the earth," to the very last, it is all true ; there is nothing false in it at all. "The book," then, is the best of all books ; it is "the book" of God. Do you think, now, my children, that you understand why it is called "the Bible?"

But how is it God's book ? Did He write it ? I will tell you. It was "given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 16) ; that is, it was **not** written by Him with pen, and ink, and paper, but he taught some good men by His holy Spirit what to write. So some parts of "the book" were written by Moses, some by David : (you have often heard of these good men, have you not ?) Then there were prophets, and the writers of the gospel, and St. Paul, and other holy men who wrote and spoke what God com-

manded, that we might know and do His will. I hope to tell you more about this another time, "if the Lord will;" but one thing I ask of you—pray God, for Jesus Christ's sake, to give *you* His Holy Spirit, or else I shall preach to you in vain, and you will hear in vain.

Let us, then, now see a little more about this text. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." We will try and understand something—1st, about "the beginning;" 2nd, about "creation;" and 3rd, about "God."

First, as to "the beginning." You cannot carry your thoughts back for many years, because you are very young; and even if you had been very old—more than a hundred years old—you would still be very, very far from "the beginning." "The beginning" here means the first of everything in the world, and that was about six thousand years ago. Before that there was nothing in the world; there was no world such as we now see. There were angels in heaven,

there was God. He made the angels before "the beginning" of the world; we do not know how, or when; but He Himself is without beginning: He made the world "in the beginning" almost six thousand years since, before which there were none of those things which afterwards appeared. Did you ever think when you walk along the pleasant green fields, and gather the yellow cowslips, or search in the hedge banks for the sweet blue violets, or weave your May garlands, that once there were no flowers to twine? It was not, my children, because the cold frost and snows of winter came and chilled them in the bud, for there was no winter, no summer, no green grass, no bright blossom, nor any ground to till; there was nothing for any one to plant or sow; there was no man; there was nothing! Still there was God above, and there may have been many beautiful and glorious beings singing His praise without ceasing, and other worlds far away with the shining stars in

the sky ; but there was nothing belonging to this world, till in "the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now, perhaps you will think it very strange that there should be nothing in "the beginning," and nobody ; so it is, and more and more wonderful the more we think about it. We can understand better that there were no trees, no flowers, no houses ; but the rocks and the mountains, the hills and valleys, the sea and the dry land, seem as if they must have been for ever. If they were not so, how could they ever be ?

Think a little, my children,—think of the text—what are the words ? "In the beginning God *created* the heaven and the earth." This brings us to consider, secondly, the meaning of creation.

Second.—Tell me, then, what did God do in the beginning ? He "*created* the heaven and the earth." Very well. Now, then, children, what do you understand by that ? I will try

and explain it to you. It means to make something without any thing to make it of. You cannot do so, nor could the wisest man that ever lived do such a thing. We may make a great many things, as you may see by looking round you. The organ was made by some man; the windows of this church were made by men, and the benches on which you sit; but then they had all that was wanted to make them of. The carpenter not only has his tools to use, but the wood to fashion into the thing he wants; and all other tradesmen have first their tools, and then their stuff; but though they may *make* many curious and beautiful things, they cannot *create* a thing so small as a pin's head. Do you now understand the difference between making and creating? God needed nothing in His work; "He created the heaven and the earth," which means that every thing both there above and here below were made by Him alone; so He is called the Creator.

If you have got "the book," and can read, open it at the first chapter, and see how all things are there set in order before us, and how each was created in turn as the earth was ready to sustain them. First, there was day and night, then the sky, then the dry land and the sea. After these, the green grass, and herbs, and fruits, and trees; then the sun and the moon; then the birds and fishes; then creeping things and cattle; and last of all man himself, for whose use all these things were made.

Third.—Before we finish, let us see, thirdly, what is known of Him who created all these things. What does "the book" tell us of His nature? It says "God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24), and where is He? He is everywhere. The book says, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and

thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalms cxxxix. 8—10). He is the God of heaven and earth. His glory and majesty are seen in heaven ; His power and goodness are shown to us on earth. But besides this, "the book" tells us a great many things about God, and the best that it tells us is that "God is love" (1 John iv. 16).

Dear children, your parents love you very much ; they would be sorry if you were hurt, and so sorry if you should be sick, or if you were to die ! But God loves you more tenderly, for He "so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). I cannot now speak to you of that ; I have a great many things to tell you of "the book," but I should not be able to speak of them now, if you could listen to them. But as God has done a great deal for you, I wonder whether it has ever come into your minds to think what you ought to do for Him ? Perhaps

you think you have done enough when you have gone down upon your knees and said your prayers; but I want you to "love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. xxii. 37), and then you will serve Him as dear children. He has said in "the book," "I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me." (Prov. viii. 17): there is the little child's promise for you, which shews that God cares for children. If you do not love Him, shall I tell you what to do? Pray this little prayer very often, "O God, give me Thy holy Spirit for Jesus Christ's sake, to make me love Thee!" God will hear and answer little children's prayers, so when you ask Him to be kind to you and your dear parents and all your family, add this little prayer. Try and remember it, and let me hear that you say it sometimes. If you love God, you will not forget Him. He will never forget you; and I hope you may so remember Him, that He may take

you to heaven. You see in the text that both heaven and earth are mentioned; and why? Is it not to remind you of the *end* as well as "the beginning?" Look up, then, my children! for Jesus has promised "where I am, there shall my servant be (John xii. 26). Oh, how happy they will be who get to that place; it is the Christian's home! Let us try, then, to follow Jesus, and you may be quite sure that He loves those who walk in His steps too well to shut the door when they seek to enter into His presence and kingdom!

The Image.

GEN. i. 26.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

WHEN you were here last Sunday, my dear children, I spoke to you about the great God, the Creator, who made all things out of nothing. How it was done we know not, except that the Psalmist says (xxxiii. 6), "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made ; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth ;" and (verse 9), "He spake, and it was done ; He commanded, and it (the earth) stood fast." Thus, all that which we see above, and around us, all that

is so bright, so beautiful, so fair, was "framed by *the word of God*, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. xi. 3). We further learn from the 31st verse of this first chapter, that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Now, as soon as all things were ready, "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

This shows us, 1st, that God is also man's creator ; and, 2nd, after what pattern God made him.

First.—The dry land, and the sea and the rivers, the trees and the fruit, the sun and the moon, and every living thing that moveth, were first made ; but why were they made ? The Lord God was about to make man, so He first made the world for him to live in, and to supply all that he might want.

I think, my children, whenever we see anything that pleases us, or find anything that is

useful to us, we should think of Him who made them, and we should thank Him for making them for us. In the spring season how pleasant is it to see the hedges bending with their load of sweet-smelling may ; or the bloom in the orchard, the flowers of the field or garden ! How we like to hear the sweet notes of the thrush and the blackbird as they sit upon the branches ; or the cuckoo as it flies quickly over our heads ; or the nightingale pouring forth its rich melody in the moonlight, whilst all the other birds of the wood are at roost ! Well, why are the flowers so beautiful, so sweet ? Why do the birds chant so cheeringly ? God made them so for man's sake—for you and for me, my children. He provided the fruits of the earth for our food, what was wanted for clothing and comfort, pleasant things to see and to hear, and then He made man. We ought surely to love Him very much.

But look at the language of the text, my chil-

dren. Do you see how the words are written? It is written, "Let *us* make *man*." Now, if you wanted to do anything, you would not say, "let us do it;" but "let me do it." When God said "Let us" do it, it shows that there were more than one person joined in the work. Who these persons are is afterwards shown us in "the book," from which we learn that they are three, viz., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are yet one God. This God, Jehovah, created man, and the text tells us, 2nd, after what pattern He formed him. "Let us make man in our image, &c." Do you know what an image is? Some of you are ready to say that it is a thing which men fall down and worship: so it is sometimes, but it does not always mean that. An image is a likeness of a thing. If I were to take clay, or a piece of wood, or stone, and fashion it into the likeness of a man, that would be an image. The same things could be made into any other sort of

image, either a beast of the field, or a bird of the air. Now, since we do not know what God is like, we do not understand that the clay of which Adam was made was an image of God; for "no man hath seen God at any time" (John i. 18): "He is a spirit" (John iv. 24), and has not flesh and bones as we have. What, then, can the image of God mean? Is there any other way in which we can be like Him? Let us see.

I think we may find at least four things in which man was like God, when we look into "the book."

First.—If you turn to Psalms xxv. 8 and cxix. 68, you will find it said that "God is good." Now, besides what is said, Gen. i. 31, in which man is certainly included, it is written, Ecc. vii. 29, "God made man upright," and that was "like" his Creator.

Second.—Then, in Lev. xi. 45, and Psalms xcix. 9, it is written that "God is holy."

Now, when God made man, there was no sin in him ; there was not a stain or taint of guilt about him : so that he was " holy," like his Creator.

Third.—And next we are told (John iv. 8 and 16,) that " God is love ;" and when man was first made, he had a heart of love. He loved God, and could see in every thing around fresh reasons for loving the Creator who had first so loved him.

Fourth.—The fourth thing I would point out to you is, that man was the only creature made with reason, *i.e.*, something which made him know and understand the things of God, and ability to speak his praise.

Thus you see that man was created good like God, holy like God, loving like God, and with a mind like God : so that he was in the image of God.

Of the body it is said that " the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Gen. ii. 7). He did not rise from the earth when

God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature, cattle and creeping thing, and beast" (verse 24); but after these were made, He said, "Let us make man after our image," and then He "formed him of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." How precious the soul. It is the breath of God! so that the heathen poet, mentioned by St. Paul, wrote more than he understood when he said, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28). We often think too much of the body, my children; but we think too little of the soul. We ought to take care of the body—it is our duty to do so, and we may bring ourselves to great harm by neglecting it; but there are some people who are so vain and proud; some who waste both time and money in fine clothes; some who pamper themselves with eating and drinking; and these things do hurt the soul: and what is the body without

the soul? The churchyard will tell us. "The dust of the ground" was not God's "image;" there is nothing in the body to make man vain.

This body of ours, my children, will not be fit for heaven, all we can do for it. There is a heaven, a joyous place, to which you are invited. I cannot tell you much about it, but all there is bright and happy; there is no crying or sorrow, for "God wipes away all tears from all eyes, and sorrow and sighing flee away" (Rev. xxi. 4). There are many shining angels, and a great company of white-robed saints playing upon their harps, and singing sweet songs of praise to God (Rev. xiv. 2, 3, xv. 2, 3). There is no dark night, for God is there shining in glory (Rev. xxi. 23, 25); no one is tired, or weary, or hungry or thirsty (Rev. vii. 16, 17), or discontented and uncomfortable, but there is more than we can think of or wish for. Would you not like to be there? Would you not like to have your

fathers and mothers there too? Mind, then, that you have a soul to be saved, and if that is fit for it, God will renew this vile body and make it "a glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21), that shall be fit for the soul and fit for heaven.

I hope you will learn something, my children, of the way to heaven; ask God to show you; ask Him to give you His Holy Spirit for Jesus Christ's sake, to instruct you; ask Him to look upon your dear parents also, and to give them His Holy Spirit too, that you may all be made fit; ask Him to sprinkle you with "the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7), and to make you again in His own "image," and then, my children, you will find a happy welcome from all the bright host above into the glorious place where God is. Perhaps there are some of you who hardly know that you have souls, or that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, and so you have

not asked for mercy and salvation. Can you, then, go to heaven ?

It is only those who are like God that will dwell with Him. Do you remember the three first of the four things in which man was made like God? He is good, He is holy, He is love. Are you good? Are you holy? I fear not, for I am sure you have done those things which God has said "thou shalt not do." Are you love? Do you love God? You should "love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and you should "love your neighbour as yourselves", (Matt. xxii. 37 and 39). What do you most care for? What do you want to have most? Would you give up any pretty thing you have for God? If I promised you something you liked very much, would you try very hard to please me? I dare say you would: but God is a better friend than I. He has brighter things in store for those that love Him. He loves you better even than your father

or mother love you, and He has promised to give all the riches of heaven to those who believe in and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Ask him to lead you there ; take care not to turn away from Him ; pray Him to send His holy Spirit to make you again in His image, and show that you wish to have your souls saved by walking in the way of the Lord's commandments, whilst you look only to Jesus Christ for pardon and eternal life.

The Garden.

GEN. ii. 15—17.

"The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Who is this "man" that the text speaks of? "The Lord God took the man," it is said. My children, there was but one man at that time, the same man that "God created in His own image" and "after His own likeness." I told you how beautiful God had made everything, and how kindly He had prepared every thing for "the man" who was to come. But although God made him to have dominion over every thing (Gen. i. 26), and could go where he

pleased, the Lord gave him one spot for a home. Was that home like our homes? Do you think the man had a house to live in, and that he wanted the many things that we want to make him comfortable? No, he had no house to dwell in, he did not need it. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Gen. ii. 8).

Let us now see, 1st, what this garden was like; 2nd, what was most remarkable in it; and 3rd, what the covenant was which the Lord God made with the man when He placed him in it.

First, then, as to the garden. There are many countries in the world where there is no need of house to keep out the cold and damp, and the deep shade of the evergreen trees shelters the inhabitants from the fierce heat of the burning sun. The garden of Eden was in a land not too hot, nor too cold. If the sun shined too

bright, the man could seek the cool glades of the garden ; if he was weary, he could rest on the green turf by the side of the clear stream ; if he was hungry, he could gather some of the beautiful fruits that hung within reach ; if he was thirsty, he could find many a sparkling fountain from which he could drink. There the Lord placed the man, and you may be sure he was happy and content, not only because every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food grew in Eden, but because his "heart was right towards God." The man's name was Adam. Perhaps God gave him that name on purpose to keep him humble, for Adam signifies earthy, and we shall soon see that there was good reason for it ; but I only mention it now that you may remember it afterwards. Do you think that Adam had nothing to do but walk about and admire the beautiful things in this garden ? Adam, I think, would soon have been tired and discontented if he had had nothing to do : it is

a sad thing to be idle. Many a child loves idleness, but they are not the happiest children. Many a man loves idleness, but they are always unhappy, because they are discontented ; they cannot be comfortable. God Himself is always working (John v. 17) ; the world is upheld by Him, and He gave Adam something to do even in Eden : " He put him into the garden to dress it and to keep it." That was Adam's pleasant toil, and all the time that he was at work in the happy and beautiful garden, he could praise the Lord for His goodness, and thank him for the mercies which he received day by day.

Second.—But I have not told you yet, my children, what was most remarkable in the garden which "the Lord God had planted." In the midst of it there stood two trees : do you remember what they were called ? The one was called "the Tree of Life," the other was called "the Tree of knowledge of good and evil."

The Tree of Life was perhaps meant for a

sign to Adam, that he should live in happiness and in the love of God for ever if he continued to keep the commandment. It could not give life of itself, for He only who first gave it can continue it. Adam might eat of that tree, and be glad. But of the Tree of Knowledge, God said "Thou shalt not eat of it."

You know, my children, that when your parents tell you not to do a thing, you must not do it. They mean to tell you for your good, but they are not obliged to give you a reason for it; still, it is your duty to obey them. Now, when God says we are not to do this thing, or that, what does He mean? Does He wish us to do as we like? No, indeed. Perhaps He will *allow* us to do as we like, but if we do, it will not be for our good. We very often wish to do the things we ought not, but God very kindly puts forth His commandment not to do it: if we love God we shall keep the commandment. Have you ever felt such a wish, my children? I will ask you

further, Have you ever done it? Ah! to be sure you can remember:—that was sin.

Now, God had told Adam “of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. ii. 16, 17).

Adam did not know what it was to die. There had been no death in the world, but he knew very well that God would be grieved and angry if he did what He had said “thou shalt not do;” he loved God too well to think of it, and that is the right ground of obedience. Adam was content, Adam was happy, and if he did not know what that meant, “thou shalt surely die,” he knew that God had made a covenant with him, which man alone could break.

Third.—You do not, however, know what is meant by “covenant.” I will tell you. A covenant means a thing agreed upon by two

persons. For instance, were I to promise to give you the thing you liked best, if you should do something I desired, what would that be? An agreement, or a covenant. Thus God agreed to give Adam life if he should be obedient, which was a covenant between God and man. This is called the covenant of works, because the reward depended upon Adam's work; and if the man did not do what was commanded, God had warned him that he should "surely die." What was it that he was not to do? There was only one little thing required of him—so little, that you will think he might well have kept his part of the covenant; so little, that if he did not keep it, you will say he deserved to die. How long he remembered, I cannot tell—but the time came when he was "disobedient to the word of the Lord," and then he deserved to die.

Now, my children, has not God given you some commandments? He has not made a covenant with you such as He made with Adam. He

has made "a new and better covenant" with us in Christ Jesus, but He has given us His commandments, which, if we break, we also deserve to die. Adam did not know what death was, but you do. You have heard the bell toll—you have seen the bearers and the sorrowing friends of the dead come slowly along the lane—you have seen the earth heaps in our church-yards—you know that there is death. You must die, and I must die, and though some of you may live long, yet we know that very little children often die, so you cannot think too soon that you must surely die like those that have gone before; but we need not be afraid to die, for there is a way by which you may be saved from eternal death. By the new covenant, which is the covenant of grace, God has promised to save all them that believe in Jesus. He makes them his children now, and will take them by-and-by to that happy place I spoke of to you last Sunday. Like the garden of Eden, which was a type of it, it is

called Paradise (Rev. ii. 7), and the way to it is so plain that it will be your own fault, my children, if you do not get there. In that land of light, of joy, and peace, you will be happier even than Adam in the beautiful garden where the Lord God placed him, and there I hope and pray that you may be placed for ever! There is one more thing, however, that I want to point out to you before we part. It is written, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Did Adam, then, die at once, when he was disobedient? Not as we understand the common words "day" and "death:" but he became at once a dying man as to his body, and a dead man as to his soul. He lived many years afterwards in the world, so that we are sure God did not mean to take away his life in a sudden way; and, besides, "a day" is often put in the Scriptures for a long time, but what the Lord *says* He means. Nobody therefore should think that God will not do as He has said, because

He does not do it directly : He will do it at the time appointed without fail.

But there was another death which Adam died—a spiritual death. His goodness, his holiness, his love perished—his happiness in God was lost, and it was necessary that he should be made “a new creature” (2 Cor. v. 17, and Eph. iv. 23, 24), before he could be said to live; and so must you, and every man that would live in Paradise, for we are by nature “dead in trespasses and sins;” therefore you should never cease to ask God to give you His holy Spirit, for Jesus Christ’s sake, that you may be “quickened,” and made to live, so that you may hereafter “eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. ii. 7, and xxii. 2).

The Lie.

GEN. iii. 4.

"The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die."

WHEN I told you, my children, about the world's creation, and of all things that are in it, I also mentioned that God created the angels. But it is not said that God made them "in the beginning" of this world; the Bible does not tell us when they were formed, or how they were created; but it shows us that there are good angels and bad angels. What have we to do,

with angels? A great deal, my children, for God sends the good angels from heaven to take care of His own people, of which I will show you an example. Once He had a prophet, whose name was Elisha ; and there was a wicked king of Syria, who wanted to kill this holy man of God, because Elisha warned his own people how to save themselves from the power of their enemies. So the king of Syria sent his horsemen and his chariots to take him, and they came by night all round the city of Dothan, where the prophet was, that he might not be able to escape. Now, when Elisha's servant found that so many soldiers and chariots were come to take his master, he was sore afraid ; but Elisha was not frightened, because he knew that God would not forsake him ; and the promise was fulfilled, which says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee : because he trusteth in thee" (Is. xxvi. 3). He prayed to God, that his servant might also be

comforted, and that He would open his eyes to see the guards that preserved them in this time of danger ; and God heard him, and opened the man's eyes, so that he saw that the mountain, on which Dothan was built, "was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings vi. 17). They were God's army of angels, sent to keep his servant from the army of Syrians which "compassed the city." We find also in God's book, that "a great multitude of the heavenly host" joined the angels who made known the glad tidings of the Saviour's birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and they "praised God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will towards men" (Luke ii. 13, 14) ; and the same book tells us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10). It is also a thing which should make you, my children, very thankful to God, that He appoints angels to take care of the little ones of

His people, who do "always behold the face of Him who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 10). Thus, you see the kindness of our God in taking care of children, who can take no care of themselves, and do not know the evil that lies before them. Praise the Lord for His goodness !

But all angels are not good : I wish they were ! The good are very good ; but the bad are very bad indeed. I cannot tell you how they came to be bad, for God did not make them so ; but they were cast out of heaven, and are wicked to this day. They hate God, who is so good, and they try to make us do things which they know will grieve Him, whilst they do us harm. They are so bad that they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6) ; yet they are allowed to come into this world, and tempt men to sin. Their chief is called "Satan," or sometimes "the devil," or "the wicked one," and other names, and they are willing to do what

he would have them do, because it is always against God. Now, when the devil saw Adam happy in serving God, and happy in the beautiful garden, it made him envy that joy and peace which the man felt, whilst he himself was cast off from the favour of God for ever. Nor did he like to see how all creation showed forth the Maker's praise. Then he thought, wickedly, that he would make Adam like himself, and spoil the "image of God." This could only be done by making the man "disobedient to the word of the Lord;" this, therefore, he tried to do. He seems to have known that God had made a covenant with Adam; do you remember it? He had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 16, 17). Here, then, was the point on which he resolved to try his power, and lead Adam into sin.

He could perceive that Eve, whom the Lord God had given to Adam, "to be an helpmeet for him," was weaker than the man, and therefore, one day as she was walking among the beautiful trees and sweet flowers, he entered into a serpent, and drew the attention of the woman toward him. Eve was not afraid of serpents, for nothing had, as yet, done harm in Eden. She stood by the tree of knowledge, and there he spoke to her, saying, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. iii. 1). As much as to say, "Is it really true that you may not eat of every tree?" How hard it is that you may not eat of what you please!

A good angel would have said, "How kind of God to give you so many good things, and so many beautiful things! Is it possible that all these things can be your's?" But the devil tries to make Eve discontented in the midst of mercies, by leading her to think of what she had

not, rather than what she had. This is the beginning of a bad principle in the heart, and the best way to get rid of it is to think of what you have. If you have but little here, think that He has given you Jesus, His Spirit, and heaven besides. Think, too, that if you had more, it might do you harm, and not good. Oh, my children, what harm that little more did to Adam, who can tell? But we will speak of that another time. Now, after the devil had put this question to Eve, as if there could be a doubt about it, she answered truly enough, that God had allowed them to eat of all, but at the same time had said, that they should neither eat nor touch the tree in the midst of the garden, "lest they should die" (Gen. iii. 2, 3). God had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die" (Gen. ii. 16, 17).

Then, he answered, "Ye shall not surely die." What was that? It was a lie: the first lie that had been spoken in this fair, sinless world. Since then, lies have been too common, and children often tell lies; but they begun with the devil, who is called "a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies." Little children sometimes tell a lie to hide a fault; but it is sure to be found out in a little time, and then they are punished, both for their lie and for their fault. However, if their lie is not found out by man, it does not deceive God. He even "searches the heart," and "there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo! He knoweth it altogether" (Psalms cxxxix. 4). He has also said, in "the Book," that "no liar shall enter into the kingdom of God" (Rev. xxi. 8). Will you not fear a lie, then, more than the truth? Pray God to give you the Holy Spirit, to help you to speak the truth at all times. Everybody loves those who speak the truth, whilst they despise the

liar ; and though the truth may sometimes bring us into a moment's trouble, it cannot bring us into sin, which is far worse—mind that. But lies bring us into double trouble, and into sin ; there is punishment for them here, and punishment for them hereafter. Tell me, then, my children, which is best, “truth, with a little trouble,” or “lies, with great shame?” I know what you think : go on, then, in the right way, with the help of God : tell no lies, for they begin with the devil—they end in hell.

Now, the devil had said, “Ye shall *not* surely die,” whereas God had said, “Thou shalt surely die.” God had spoken what was true ; why should Eve believe the lie? Yet she suffered herself to be persuaded, though she had the word of God upon her lips. She doubted God.

The devil always tempts us in some lying way, for though we do not now find him taking the form of a serpent, and speaking to us, he uses other means. He persuades by wicked men,

and leads us to do things which we ought not to do ; or he puts thoughts of evil into our hearts, when we wish to do what God has said, "Thou shall not do." What should we do when tempted thus ? What should Eve have done ? She should have told him that it was false, she should have asked God's help, she should have believed His word. This is what we should do, for "the book" says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. iv. 7). But, alas ! Eve did not resist ; she staid—she looked—she longed—she hearkened to the voice of the tempter, who added to his lie, saying, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. iii. 5). She no longer hesitated, she gathered the fair fruit, and did eat. Nor was this all, "she gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat !"

It makes us sorry at this day to think of what Adam did then ; and we may well grieve, for it

was our ruin as well as his. Perhaps you think, my children, you would not have done as Adam did. I don't know how that might have been. I am glad that life does not hang by such a thread as man's will *now*. Sure I am, that we do many things that are evil and wicked every day, so that we have much to be sorry for, because if God should deal with us after our sins, we should "surely die." But He has made known to us that there is pardon for the sinner. Ask Him for it; ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Ask for the Holy Spirit, and say, "O God, make me very sorry for my sins; help me to resist the devil; teach me to believe Thy word, to love Thee and follow Thy commandments through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The Consequence.

GEN. iii. 13.

"What is this that thou hast done?"

POOR Adam ! poor Eve ! Are they found out ? To be sure they are ; and they are asked, too, what it was that they had done. What a question at such a time ! They could not hide it from God ; nor can we ever think, my children, to screen ourselves from His all-searching eye, though we may wish to do it when we feel that we have done anything wrong. Surely Adam

could not think, when he ran into the thick groves of the garden, that God would not find him even there : he could not think, when he took the fruit which he was forbidden to eat, that God would not know about it ; but when he took it, he did not think of the commandment ; he forgot God. That is the way that people sin : they forget that God is present, they forget all His goodness and His love, and they only think of *pleasing themselves*.

Let me, then, put you in mind, my children, of one, who is called the second Adam, who "pleased not himself" (Rom. xv. 3), but in everything remembered the will of God, so that a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17).

Let me tell you also of a good man who, when he was tempted to do what God had forbidden, went his way, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9).

If we forget that God is present with us, we shall also forget what He tells us ; we shall do what our own hearts tempt us to do, which will certainly lead us into sin : but if we remember to call on God, He will give us His holy spirit to keep us from sin, and strengthen us like Joseph, and make us obedient like His beloved Son.

But let us now look, my children, at the consequence of Adam's disobedience. The devil had promised him the wisdom of God, and that he should be as God. We shall see, first, what he learnt from the lie ; secondly, what he found from the truth.

First.—What did he learn from the lie ? You remember what I told you about the angels who were turned out of heaven, and that Satan took upon himself the form of a serpent, that he might draw near to Eve, and talk to her, I suppose, without being found out. It was then that he persuaded her to eat of the fruit, for,

“ when she saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” she ate it, and gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat” (Gen. iii. 6), although God had said to him, “ In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. ii. 17). They believed Satan ; they thought they should learn a great deal, and so they did ; but not what they wished or expected.

1. They learnt what *sorrow* was. They had never known what that meant ; they were happier than the happy child on whom father or mother never frowned, and who has never felt the rod.

2. They learnt what *shame* was. They had been innocent, and had never yet had cause to blush or redden ; but now they could not look upon each other, or to their Creator, without the warm blood rising to betray their shame.

3. They learnt what *fear* was. Where all was so beautiful, so joyous, there was a time

that brought with it a beam of brighter joy ; it was when the Lord God drew near, and talked with Adam. They used not to tremble then nor feel afraid ; but now, when “ they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, in the cool of the day,” did Adam and his wife come forth to greet Him ? No ! “ they hid themselves from His presence.”

These were some of the painful consequences of sin, of which you yourselves can judge in a little measure, my children. It is painful to hang down the face because the scarlet blush comes on it ; it is painful when the warm tears burst from the eye ; and it is painful when conscience makes the heart beat fast with fear : but all this Adam and Eve learnt by doing that which God said, “ Thou shalt not do.”

Perhaps, however, Adam began to think that he need not be afraid, and that the serpent was right when he said, “ Ye shall not surely die.” He did not find any change in himself, he lived,

he moved, he spoke, he thought ; or perhaps he thought that he could really hide in the thick shade of the trees, so that an angry God should not see him. If so, though Eve had thought " it was a tree to be desired to make one wise," it was a proof that its fruit had only made them foolish. They must have felt then the more afraid when God's voice called to him and said, " Adam, where art thou?" He could not be hid ; he could not be silent ; he did not mean to say what he had done, but he betrayed himself by what he did say. He wanted to excuse himself for trying to hide, and his excuse showed that he was guilty. " I was afraid, because I was naked." Naked he had always been, but he had felt no fear, no shame before. So that He might bring it more closely to his conscience, God further asked, " Who told thee that thou wast naked?" There was nobody to tell Adam about it ; it was some of the poor knowledge he had gained when he thought to be " wise as God."

And did Adam say "yes" at once, when he was asked, "Hast thou eaten of the tree?" No, he laid the blame upon the woman—"She gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Now, it was true that the woman gave the fruit to him, but was that a reason why he should eat it? Adam would not have eaten had he not pleased. It is no excuse for us when we do wrong, my children, to say my brother did it, or my sister told me. It very often happens that when one does a wicked thing, another will do the same; but that is no excuse for sin. Suppose one of you was to go into a shop and steal, would it be right for another to take part of what you had stolen? No, surely. So Adam knew very well that he ought not to eat of the fruit which "the woman gave" him; but he did eat, because he chose to do it, and so he must bear the punishment of his own sin.

My dear children, we may many times be asked to do what God has said "Thou shalt not

do ;” and sometimes you may be laughed at by wicked companions for not doing what they do ; but mind God first ; be firm, be steadfast (see 1 Cor. xv. 58), and do not be so foolish as to let others laugh you out of doing what is right, or laugh you into doing what is wrong.

However, if Adam thought to save himself by blaming Eve, he was mistaken. God meant to call them both to account, but He would first search out the facts and beginning of their sin, so He said to Eve, “ What is this that thou hast done ?” Eve did not know all that was meant by that question, and she could not tell : she made this excuse, “ the serpent beguiled me” (Gen. iii. 13).

When we have done wrong, how ought we to feel ? Should we not be meek and sorry ? Yes : but did Adam feel sorry ? did Eve feel sorry ? They did not say so ; they had grown too proud, perhaps, to confess their fault as they ought, for Adam said it was “ the woman whom

Thou gavest to be with me," as much as to say, if *Thou* hadst not given me the woman, I should not have sinned; and Eve said, "the serpent beguiled me," as much as to say, "it was not my fault." Yet Eve did it, and Adam did it too; let us see, therefore, secondly, what they found from God's truth. They gained the reward of their own doings.

Second.—"What is this that thou hast done?" Alas, what a question! Thou hast brought sin into the world, and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). God's truth was, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Satan's lie was, "Ye shall not surely die." How was the truth fulfilled? First.—There was an immediate curse laid upon the serpent, so that the very creature into which Satan entered is marked to this day by "going upon its belly:" there is a natural enmity on man's part against it, for it is everywhere hated for its venom, and is destroyed. Second.—Then the sufferings and

sorrows of childbirth are laid upon the woman.

Third.—The very ground is cursed for man's sake ; he himself should eat of it in sorrow all the days of his life ; it should bring forth weeds and briers, which he would have hard labour to root out. Fourth.—As he was made of dust, to dust he must return. What is that but death ? It is true that he did not fall dead at once ; but, you will find in the Bible, that *a day* does not always mean our day of twenty-four hours, but a certain time appointed by God (2 Pet. iii. 8). But, as I told you last Sunday, Adam became at once a dying man. He could not die before ; there was no venom in the serpent's bite ; there was no fury in the wild beast ; there was no decay ; but now he was every day drawing near to death. It is so with you and me, for from the first moment that we become living creatures we begin to die. Who would think that, as the little child keeps growing day by day, till he puts on the strength and form of man, he is

day by day returning to dust? So the young man in the prime of his strength, and the young woman in the bloom of her beauty, are dying. The youngest, therefore, should be prepared to die.

But Adam died a spiritual death at once. From the moment that he ate the fruit he lost *eternal life*, and became subject to *eternal death*. These, then, are the things they found from the truth of God, who had said, "Thou shalt surely die;" viz., suffering, labour, death here, and death hereafter. Who should deliver them? They were sinners: still, however, God gave them one promise, which shone like a sunbeam in the gloom of that day; it is the same promise which he has made to you and to me. Oh, that by the teaching and help of the Holy Spirit we may lay hold of it! but we will speak of that next Sunday; now it will be a good question for you each to ask yourselves, "What have I done?" My children, have you done what is

wrong? Think a little—what have you done this day? do not try and find excuses for sin like Adam and like Eve. Tell God at once, in shame and sorrow, and ask Him, saying, “O God, pardon my sin, for Jesus Christ’s sake, and give me Thy Holy Spirit, that I may be able to love and serve Thee. Amen.”

The Promise.

GEN. iii. 15.

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

It is very pleasant, my children, to hear about the happy days when Adam lived with God, and when he dressed and kept the beautiful garden which the Lord had planted for him in Eden. Our minds can almost wander with him in the pleasant paths of righteousness and peace. In that fair land we saw him gathering fruit that never failed, and, as he walked along, the

whole air was fragrant with the sweet perfume of flowers that faded not. Do you not wish to be there also ? But it was not meant for a sinner's home ; the wicked must not dwell there. As soon, therefore, as Adam sinned, he must leave its beauty and its sweetness, to wander in a world that was cursed for his sake. God was angry with him ; but He was also sorry for Adam, who had brought upon himself the sentence of death.

The Lord knew very well what would happen to Adam, for He knows all things from "the beginning." It was not without His permission that the devil took the form of the serpent ; nor was He ignorant of his devices when he went forth to tempt the poor woman to do wrong. He saw, also, when she gave of the fruit to her husband, and he ate. "Thou shalt die," He said ; but "He willeth not the death of a sinner, but had rather he should turn away from his wickedness and live," and if any perish,

it is by their own fault. God did not wish that Adam should die so as to perish for ever ; therefore He made him a promise, which we shall now consider. Pray God to give you His Holy Spirit, and, for Jesus Christ's sake, to enable you to understand and receive it into your hearts.

This promise you will find in the words of the text, and when you understand it, you will see how very sweet and comforting it must have sounded in the ears of those two poor trembling things who were called out of their hiding-place to stand before the Lord God. They were naked and ashamed, and when asked by their Judge to give account of what they had done, what could they expect to hear but the solemn word, "Thou shalt surely die?" They were very sad, their hearts were troubled, they were sore afraid ; but through this promise, God taught Adam and Eve still to hope and trust in Him.

We also have cause enough to be sad for our own sins, for which we deserve to die; but when we have a good hope in God, the heavy burden on our heart seems to grow light, and the fear of being punished is taken away. It was thus with Adam and Eve: they could never be so happy as they had been before they made God angry; but they had good reason to be happier after their fear was calmed, and they saw that God was still their friend. Yet, how could this be? how could the holy God be reconciled with the sinner? This we shall see by looking into the different parts of the text, in which it is said, 1st, there should be enmity between the serpent and the woman; 2nd, that two distinct seeds are spoken of; and 3rd, that a promise of triumph is given to one of them.

First.—Do you know what is meant by the word “enmity?” It means hating one another. God does not put enmity between the man and the woman, or between man and man; no man

should ever hate another ; we should "love one another" as God loves us. But God says to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." Why? Because he had caused the world's ruin. He had done all the harm he could do ; but instead of bringing the man and woman down to hell, where he himself is, and taking God's glory from Him by joining these His creatures to his own wicked host, enmity is placed between him and the woman, so that she would resist him. Now mark, my children, for there seems to be a special reason for this enmity between the serpent and the woman : he first tempted the woman, and woman has been ever since his strongest foe. Does not the woman first teach her little ones to pray? Does not the mother most often warn her children against the paths of the destroyer? And often, too, it is the mild persuasion of woman that wins man back to God, she being the first to serve Him. I do not mean to say that women

have not the same sinful nature that men have, or that they need not seek to be saved in the same way, and by the same grace that men do ; but their hearts are sooner touched, and they more readily give themselves to God. See that woman for an example of pious love who anointed the Lord's feet, and wiped them with the hairs of her head (John xii. 3). They were women, too, who lingered to the last by the cross of Jesus, and afterward came the first to the sepulchre. Yes ! God has thus made the woman that she might be the better able to do His will, and it was meant, I think, as a particular mark of favour that He at the first "put enmity between her and the serpent."

Second.—But the words of the text do not stop here, for it was not meant that the enmity should last only so long as Eve should live ; it was to continue throughout the ages of the world, from generation to generation, "between thy seed and her seed." The word seed means

children : thus it was to be between the children of the woman and the children of the devil. But how can this be? Has the devil children? Is he not a spirit? It is true; but still there is a sense in which he has many children. They who do the devil's works are counted by God as the children of the devil. Jesus says to the Jews, when they wished to put him to death, "Ye are of your father the devil" (John viii. 44). Again, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, do you know who are meant by the tares? They are "the children of the wicked one" (John viii. 38), *i.e.* the devil. St. Paul, speaking to Elymas, the sorcerer, says, "Thou child of the devil" (Acts xiii. 10); and St. John plainly declares that, "he that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). The Book, then, does not permit us to doubt who they are that are counted as the seed of the serpent, for the wicked are the children of "the wicked one," *i.e.* the devil.

But what are we to understand by the "seed of the woman?" This you will find has two meanings. First, it means those who serve God and love Him. They are called "the children of light," whilst the wicked are called "the children of this world;" they are "of the day," whilst the wicked "are of the night;" they love the truth of God, and they walk according to it. They are also called "the children of God," because they are made His children by adoption and grace, and are permitted to call Him "Father." You know, my children, that the Lord himself has taught us, when we pray, to say "Our Father;" and such is our God to all that hearken to His word. He calls upon you to trust in Him, and He says to you and to me, "Come out from among (sinners) and be ye separate and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters" (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). The seed of the serpent hate these who are the woman's seed, the "heirs of God." I cannot tell you

all they have done against them, or what they are doing at this day. We find instances enough in the Bible itself, which you may take for examples. Thus Daniel, a child of God, was cast into the den of lions for no fault but that of serving his Master. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego were good men, and children of God ; these they cast into the " burning fiery furnace " because the wicked ones hated and persecuted them. But from the time when Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and slew him, the wicked have always hated the good, and have done all they could, or all they dared to do, against them ; so you see there has been a continual enmity between these two seeds. The good, indeed, do not hate the bad, but they hate their bad deeds and reprove them ; and it is our duty at all times to separate ourselves from the company of wicked persons, and not look upon their evil deeds, lest we become ready to follow them.

But there is another meaning to "the seed" of the woman. First, you may remark that there was "enmity put between" the two seeds, and then it is added, "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," which seems to bring it to a personal struggle between two individuals, *i.e.* the seed and the serpent. "The seed," then, refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 14), and who was in a peculiar manner "the seed" of the woman. This, then, thirdly, is the promise we spoke of—the earliest promise of a Saviour to the lost. It tells Adam, four thousand years before the time, that Jesus Christ the Son of God should come and be a man; become, indeed, "the seed" of the woman; and that this "seed" should bruise the serpent's head. Oh, what joy! Oh, what triumph! The victory is already gained where God has promised it! Her seed shall "bruise thy head," oh serpent! We may say that the life of a creature is in the head, so that if the head be

bruised, the life is gone, the enemy is destroyed. This, of course, was to be a spiritual conflict; and we find, accordingly, that Jesus came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8), to "make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. ix. 24); to give the Holy Ghost, to save sinners, and restore them to life and immortality. . Through His righteousness they are made meet to dwell again with God, and through faith in Him they are counted pure and sinless as Adam was when first placed in the beautiful garden of Eden. The woman's seed should thus "bruise the head" of the serpent, whilst the serpent should "bruise the heel" of her seed; which means that he should have a certain power to do mischief, but not to destroy; for the heel is not a vital part, like the head. This he does still, by persecuting the children of God; this he did when he stirred up men to crucify the Lord of glory, but it was his own deathblow; for though Jesus died, He rose again

to give us hope, and He ascended up to heaven, to carry on His great work of bringing man to God.

What can we wish for more ? We could not have expected so much, but that God has promised it. If we believe this good news, we shall observe His commandments, and it will be well ; for you will have the happy portion of God's children in a brighter paradise than the garden of Eden.

I have not said enough to you on this subject, my children, but I have said more, perhaps, than you can remember. Let me only now say one thing more : it is, that you remember to pray against the wiles of the devil. Daily ask this of God, "Give me Thy Holy Spirit, for Jesus Christ's sake, to help me to overcome the sin of my own heart, and the temptations of the devil." This is what we all want, that we may not lose the blessing which the woman's seed has gained by His victory over the serpent. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. vii. 7).

The Everlasting Word.

JOHN i. 1.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

THESE words, my children, are from another part of "the book" than those you have heard hitherto. As I mentioned to you before, there are the writings of many different men in the Bible, but all are written under the teaching of the Holy Ghost. These writings are divided into the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament was written before the coming of the

Lord Jesus Christ; the New Testament was written after His coming. The things spoken of in the New Testament explain many things spoken of in the Old which we could not otherwise understand, so that we plainly see they were written under the teaching of the same Spirit; for how else could any one foretell those things which should come to pass so many thousand years after?

Now, in the first text, it was said, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" and in this text it is said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Recall, then, to your minds, my children, so far as you can, the circumstances of creation, when all things were made out of nothing, yet all made beautiful and "very good." Think, too, of Adam, who was "formed out of the dust of the ground;" and of the garden so sweet with flowers, so stored with fruit, in which "the

Lord God placed Adam, that he might dress and keep it." Do you remember the two trees in the midst of it? Do you remember the covenant? and the lie of the serpent, which was the devil? Then came the question which shewed Adam and Eve that they could not be hid; the curse on the serpent and his seed, which means the wicked; and the blessing on the seed of the woman, to whom victory is promised in the strife with the serpent; so that both a hope and pledge of life were given to Adam and Eve at the very moment when they might have justly expected to die for ever.

God is very gracious, my children; He does not "deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities" (Ps. ciii. 10). In that promised seed of the woman we are led to expect a conqueror. That promise is the key that unlocks the scriptures. It is repeated again and again, through the times of the patriarchs and prophets, during the long space of

four thousand years ; and because the time was long it was continually brought before the minds of the people of God, lest they should forget it. If you had a promise of something you wished for very much, you would think it a long time to wait a whole year for it ; perhaps you would forget it before that, and perhaps the person who promised it might forget, but God does not forget. A tender mother will forget her child sooner than God will forget His promises ; He will always do what He has said. Although, therefore, many people did forget this promise of the seed, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman" (Gal. iv. 4), to "bruise the serpent's head." It is He who in the text is called "the Word."

Let me repeat the text to you : "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Here are three distinct heads :—1st, the Word is said to have

been in the beginning; 2nd, we are told that He was with God; and 3rd, that He was God. Let us examine these heads, and pray that the Holy Spirit may open your minds to understand them, for Jesus Christ's sake!

First.—I have already told you, my children, that "the Word" is one of the names of the Lord Jesus. He is called by various other names. In Genesis He is spoken of as "the Seed;" He is called "the Star of Jacob" in the book of Numbers; Isaiah speaks of Him as "Immanuel;" Jeremiah, as "the Lord our Righteousness;" David and Daniel, as "Messiah;" St. Paul, as the second "Adam;" St. Matthew, as "the Son of David;" St. Luke, as "the Son of God;" St. John, as "the Son of Man," and also frequently as "the Word." There are many other names by which He is called, but "the Word" is that which is here brought under our notice. I do not know why he is called "the Word," but it was a name

which was known among the Jewish people as applying to the Messiah. Some persons think He is so called because it is He who has made known to us the will of God, as we make known our will by the words we express ; but however that may be, it is enough for us to understand that it is a name by which Jesus is spoken of in the scriptures, and that He "was in the beginning."

It will be very pleasant to tell you, my children, about Him, and I think you will like to hear again and again of the things which He did and said, although you can most of you read in your own Bibles that He made blind people see, deaf people hear, and dumb people speak, besides many other things, for he healed the sick and raised the dead to life. But I shall have to tell you many a sad tale too, for men used Him very ill ; they said hard things to Him, they hated Him, and were so angry with Him that at last they laid hands upon Him, and

nailed Him to a cross till He died. At present, however, we must see a little more of what the text says of Him. He "was in the beginning." When was that? I have told you before about it: can you now remember? It was before the first moment of creation; before the heavens and the earth were made; before God said, "Let there be light," and the light broke forth upon the deep gloom. The days and the weeks had not yet been divided, "the earth was without form, and void," but they had a beginning, and in that "beginning" "the Word was." It is not that He lived first at that time, for He "was" in eternity, which has no beginning and no end. Some day we shall know better what that means, because this world shall pass away, and "time shall be no longer." Happy will it be for us if we now walk in the way that leads to the place where "the Word was," viz., secondly, "with God." There there is no sorrow, no pain, but all is joy and peace. It is very

different from this world of sin, which "shall pass away with a great noise, (whilst) the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. iii. 10). In heaven, "with God," there can be no cause for change, for sin cannot enter there as it did in the garden of Eden. All there has been always perfect, always glorious, and such it always will be. There, "the Word was with God," my children; there, angels did His pleasure, "hearkening unto the voice of His word;" and all the sinless company of heaven praised and worshipped Him. How could He ever leave "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was?" (John xvii. 5.) How could He be content to come into a world of sin and sorrow? My children, this is a great mystery which is made known to us in the Bible: it was His unchangeable love to man; He wished to save sinners from death, to "bruise the serpent's head," and so He came

to be a man, and die! Then, was Jesus an angel, or archangel? What was He in the beginning in heaven?

Third.—"The Word was God," *i.e.* Jesus Christ was God.

Perhaps you remember that when I preached to you from that text, "Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness" (Gen. i. 26), I told you that those little words, "us" and "our," mark more than one person. Thus, it is not said, "*I* will make man in *my* image, after *my* likeness," but "let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." "The Spirit of God" is mentioned before as "moving upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i. 2), when the world was being created; and though it is many times declared in the scriptures of the Old Testament, yet I only bring before you, at this time, the plain fact here asserted, that "the Word," *i.e.* Jesus Christ, "was with God, and was God." So that, you see, each person is distinctly named,

and. "yet they are not three Gods, but one God."

I tell you this because it is made known to us in the Bible. I do not try to explain to you how it is, because the wisest man can tell you no more than a child may know. It is, however, a great comfort to know that Jesus is God, because we feel that "He is able to save to the uttermost;" nor can we doubt His willingness, because He came from His glory on purpose to do so. He has also done all that was necessary to bring us to salvation. This He did when "He became flesh and dwelt among us;" for then "He bare our sins in His own body" (1 Pet. ii. 24), and "made peace for us" (Eph. ii. 15). We will, however, leave this for the present, for it will deepen your own feeling of grateful love if you keep in mind the truth of what I have been speaking to you, that "the Word was God," because it teaches us to value more that love which led Him to become man,

and to suffer and die as He did for man. Pray that the Holy Spirit may enable you to remember it, so that you may obey His word, and through faith be made heirs of His salvation.

The Seed.

JOHN i. 14.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

HAVING told you, my children, what is made known to us about the everlasting Word, who "was in the beginning," "with God," and also "God," it seems natural that we should examine into what is further revealed to us concerning Him. In all that has been said you have seen the proof of His love; but although you know that love to be very great, so high, so deep, so

long, so broad, that man cannot understand it, you could never have thought of the way in which God would fulfil his promise about "the seed of the woman" if you had not been already told. Everything in the great work of creation is wonderful; but what is more wonderful than creation itself is the grand truth declared in the text, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." If you could understand all its importance to our souls your young hearts would always beat with thankfulness to Him, and you would indeed love Him who first loved us. Let us, however, see what instruction may be gathered from these words. Pray that the Father would send us His Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus, to teach us what we ought to learn from them.

Here, then, two things are declared :—First, "The Word was made flesh," and, second, "He dwelt among us."

First.—"The Word was made flesh." We

have before learnt that "the Word" is one of the names by which the Jews were taught to believe in the Son of God. "The Word" is Jesus, but the name of Jesus was not given Him until the angel Gabriel told Mary that He should be born of her. "Flesh" means man, all that belongs to human nature such as God created man. If, then, you read "God was made man," you will more clearly understand what is meant by "the Word was made flesh." This is what is called the "Incarnation" of Jesus Christ, which I mention to you here, my children, because "Incarnate" and "Incarnation" are words often used, and you will perhaps be better able to remember their meaning if you connect it in your minds with "the Word was made flesh." But I think we had better look into the circumstances of this wonderful thing, which was the first fulfilment of the promise made to Adam and Eve in Paradise about the seed of the woman.

Then I must tell you, my children, that about four thousand years had passed away since the promise had been made. It seemed a very long time, but God never forgot it, and His people always looked forward to it with hope. This "seed" had been promised to Abraham, and afterwards to David. Though David was king of all Israel, his children's children became poor, and seem to have been little noticed among the Jews; but the Jews were very particular in keeping a register of their families, so that any of them could trace their fathers, and their fathers' fathers, up to the time of Abraham. Thus, when St. Matthew writes the gospel, he begins by opening the "book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," and he traces it down to the birth of Jesus, that all men might know and believe that he was the very Seed which was promised. Now, among the children of David there was a poor but pious virgin, whose name was Mary;

she was going to be married to a man named Joseph, but before that took place the angel Gabriel appeared to her, and told her from God that she should have a son "whose name should be called Jesus; that He should be great, and should be called the Son of the Highest; that the Lord God should give unto Him the throne of His father David; and that of His kingdom there should be no end" (Luke i. 32, 33). All this seemed very wonderful to Mary, but she did not dispute the will of the Lord, and she was willing to bear reproach for His name's sake. Mary had learned to look for the promised seed, though she little thought to be the mother of Jesus, but when she saw that the Saviour was to be born of her she rejoiced greatly both for herself and for all the people of Israel.

Many things which God had spoken before by His holy prophets were fulfilled when the time came that Mary should bring forth her son. Do you remember any of them? I think

you must all recollect what Isaiah said (vii. 14), "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." You can also tell me the meaning of "Immanuel," can you not? St. Matthew tells us (i. 23) that "being interpreted it is, God with us." Now, what is that but "the Word made flesh?" It is the very same.

Another prophecy, spoken by the prophet Micah, was fulfilled in a very remarkable way. He had said (v. 2), "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." It seemed little probable that Jesus should be born in Bethlehem, for Mary and Joseph did not live there; their home was far off in Nazareth of Galilee; there was nothing likely to bring them a long journey of sixty or seventy miles to Bethlehem; but if Jesus had not been born

there, the Jews would have had a good reason for not believing in Him. Mark, then, my children, how God brings to pass things which appear impossible. A heathen emperor, who knew nothing of God, nor of His prophets, nor of the expected Seed, made a decree "that all the world should be taxed" (Luke ii. 1). He wanted to know the number and the quality of all his subjects for his own purposes. For this taxing every one was obliged to go up to the city from whence their fathers came, in order to write down their names and give account of themselves. Joseph and Mary, therefore, were obliged to take this long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of David their forefather ; and whilst they were there the time was fulfilled that Jesus should be born. The prophecy was there accomplished, "the Word was made flesh," and the proof was not wanting that He who claimed to be Messiah was the Son of David, born in Bethlehem.

Second.—But now the Word was come to “dwell among us.” My children, when we expect the birth of a prince we make many preparations to welcome him, and we shew many tokens of rejoicing at his birth. Was it so when “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us?” The great people did not notice Him; there was no room for His parents in the inn; He was so much a stranger in the world that He was an outcast from the first; He was born in a stable; His cradle was a manger, and there His mother watched over the first days of the helpless infancy of Him who was “the Lord of Glory.” How very wonderful this seems, that the Son of God should come unknown, unwelcomed, to dwell among us! Yet there were some who knew it, because God made it known to them; and whilst the people in the inn were feasting, without a thought of the poor woman and her child, a few shepherds in the country, “abiding in the field and keeping watch over

their flocks by night," were startled by the appearance of an angel in shining glory; he told them the "good tidings of great joy" that a Saviour was that day born in Bethlehem "which is Christ the Lord;" he moreover told them where to find Him, and as soon as he had made an end of speaking "a multitude of the heavenly host," *i.e.* the angels who had been wont to worship and adore the Word in the glory of heaven, began to chant a hymn of praise, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke ii. 14).

Perhaps it was for the first time that the holy angels began to understand the way in which God would save sinners. They were full of wonder, full of joy: they wondered at God's deep love, they rejoiced to see salvation brought to the lost, and so they broke forth in the beautiful and sweet song which the shepherds heard after they had been told that "the Word was made flesh," and had come to "dwell among

us." They are glad when one sinner repents; how great, then, must have been their joy when they saw a way opened through the "flesh" of Christ for all who wished to "flee from the wrath to come." Yes, my children, it is the way for you and for me, for "there is none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Seek it and you shall find it, for not a child even shall ever seek the right way in vain.

But turn your thoughts once more to the text, in the latter part of which it is said He "dwelt among us." If we think of the greatness and glory of the Creator of heaven and earth, we might suppose it most likely that if He came to a sinful world He would dwell far off. There was a bright glory about the angel that appeared to the shepherds which made them "sore afraid," and it would be reasonable to think that a yet brighter glory would surround the angels' king when He came. Was

it so? No; He had come, not for a moment, nor a day, but to "dwell with us," and as He invited all "that laboured and were heavy laden" to "come to Him" for "rest" (Matt. xi. 28, 29), so there was nothing about Him to make us afraid. He dwelt with us as a friend with friends, as man with men; He was "made flesh," and the ~~beginning~~ of the fulfilment of the promise was seen when the Word, as the seed of the woman, came and "dwelt among us." Pray often to Him, my children, saying, "Take me, O Lord Jesus, in due time to dwell with Thee."

The Search.

MATTHEW ii. 2.

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

THE city of David was but a little town, but at the time about which the things happened that we have been speaking of there were many people in it ; perhaps there had never been so many people gathered together within the walls of Bethlehem before. How was it, my children, that they went up there ? Was it to see any wonderful sight ? Was it to be present at some

great feast, or sacrifice? Were they called there to worship? No, it was none of these things. The most wonderful event had taken place, it is true, which, if it had been known and understood, would have called the whole world together; but men's minds were too full of earthly thoughts to give heed to the "good tidings of great joy" which had been revealed to the shepherds by the angel messenger from God. You remember that there had gone out a decree from the Roman emperor, "that all the world should be taxed:" it was this which brought so many to the little city of Bethlehem at the time the Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. Friends that had been long separated were again brought face to face, and there were, no doubt, many happy greetings between families and kindred that had not met for years and years. And a happy thing it is, my children, that God has made men to feel there is a bond between kindred, a link that joins not only a mother to her

child, a husband to his wife, but also brother to brother, and friend to friend. It seems sad to part with those we love, though it would not do for families always to live together ; and, indeed, it sometimes happens that when far away from each other, friends are united by a stronger love than if they had always lived in the same village, or under the same roof. But what a happy thing it is when children come back to the home of their parents, and see again all the loved faces of other days ! How many things to say, how many things to hear ! All who have been parted know what a pleasure it is to meet again ; but then our talk at such times, should it be always about the things of this life ? Shall we tell of the things we have done, and the money we have earned, and the fine things we have seen, and the dangers we have passed, and say nothing about what God has given us, what God has done for us, or what God has promised to those that love Him ? Surely, my children, we

should tell one another about such things, and it will add much to our happiness, when we see our friends, if we can converse together of Jesus. It will be sad in the midst of joy if, after years and years have passed away, we cannot say that we have better hopes of heaven, and know no more of Jesus than when we parted. We have every day more cause to love Him, and if you love Him you will talk of him ; for, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34), *i.e.* when the heart cleaves very much to anything, the tongue will be telling of it. Now, the hearts of the shepherds were full, for they had come to Bethlehem "to see the thing which had come to pass, which the Lord had made known to them ;" and they "found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger" (Luke ii. 15, 16). Could they be silent ? No ; "when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child" (17).

You would have thought that all the people in Bethlehem would have gone to seek Jesus ; that the streets of the little town would have echoed with the shouts of "Hosanna;" and that the babe would have been carried in triumph to the best house in the place, whilst the people now fell down to worship and adore, now rose up to give glory to Him who had "visited and redeemed His people" (Luke i. 68). Alas ! my children, there was no such sign of rejoicing : "all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds" (Luke ii. 18). The people that were gathered together had other things to think of ; they paid no heed to the message of God ; the promise of "the Seed" did not interest them ; they cared only for the things of this world. "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart:" the shepherds returned to watch over their flocks, "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto

them" (Luke ii. 19, 20) ; but we do not find that the people in Bethlehem thought anything more about it ; the busy crowd departed to their own homes, and the little city was left with its few inhabitants as calm and still as it had been before "the decree of Cæsar Augustus went out that all the world should be taxed."

This brings us to that point in the history which connects it with the text. Let us, then, first, mark the unfolding of God's purpose ; secondly, the trouble of Herod at the wise men's question ; and, thirdly, the finding of the King.

First, then, mark the unfolding of God's purpose.

First.—Most likely all would have been forgotten in Bethlehem if the matter had stopped here ; but when God would make a thing known He finds means to publish it. It was His purpose, in promising that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head, that all the world should know it, from the least to the greatest.

The name given to the babe was Jesus. Have I not told you the meaning of that name? It is "Saviour." Now Jesus came to the Jews; He was born of a Jewish mother; He was himself, "according to the flesh," a Jew; but He did not come to be the Saviour of the Jews only; He came that you, and I, and "all who believe on Him might not perish but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). The "good tidings" which the angel brought were to the Jews "and to all people," the whole world. At this time, indeed, the Jews were the only nation who knew about God and the promised "seed;" but about six hundred years before, Nebuchadnezzar, a famous king of Babylon, had carried the whole nation captive into his own land. There were some good men amongst them, prophets of God. Though these prophets were commanded by God to speak principally to their own people, yet, "out of the abundance of their hearts," they would be sure to speak to those about them of

God and the promised "Seed." Very likely they reminded the people of Babylon of Balaam's prophecy, nearly a thousand years before the captivity, that "there should come a Star out of Jacob" (Num. xxiv. 17), which related to the coming of Jesus. Some of the wise men of that country, or of its neighbourhood east of Judea, had remembered this, I suppose, and perhaps they had treasured up the books of the prophets after the Jews left Babylon under king Cyrus, of which we read in the Bible; but, however that may be, when God made a new bright star in the heavens, they understood it as a sign that "the Seed," "the Star out of Jacob," had come.

This sign was another token of God's love to the world, and His "good will to man." The shepherds were not told to leave their flocks and go and preach in the east. These wise men lived a long way off, so they would not be likely to hear of Jesus from the Jews, therefore God

declared His birth in this way, a way which the shepherds would not have understood, but which the wise men did understand. Don't you think they must have been very glad? Certainly they were, and so they set out upon their long journey to Jerusalem, to find Him that was "born King of the Jews."

Second.—They came to Jerusalem, therefore, with this question of the text in their mouth: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Now, Herod was king; did they want Herod? No; they might go to Herod's palace, and think to find him there, but the people of the palace could not tell; but Herod himself heard the inquiry, and he trembled. Why should he be "troubled?" He feared that he should lose his kingdom, his power, his glory, if the rightful "King of the Jews" was come. Herod need not have feared that, for Jesus does not wish to reign upon kings' thrones, but in men's hearts; He would have the sinner to be saved. He

loves us, and He would have us love Him; He came not to take away the power of kings, but to strengthen it by the law which He has given both for the king and the beggar: that law is "the royal law" of love. Herod, then, need not have been troubled when the wise men asked the question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" But Herod was a wicked man, and God has put a conscience in the mind which pricks the sinner to the soul, and troubles him even when there is no cause for fear. It is a very terrible thing this conscience, and if it tells you that you have sinned, repent and seek forgiveness through Jesus the only Saviour! Did Herod repent? No, he sinned yet more; for as soon as he had learnt from the priests and scribes that Christ should be born in Bethlehem, he formed a plan in his own mind to slay Jesus. He told the wise men to come back and tell him when they had found Him, pretending that he also wanted to go and worship Him. So they went.

Third.—They needed no guide on their journey, for the Star appeared again, the same Star which they had seen in their own country, and it “went before them, till it came and stood over the place where the young child was” (Matt. ii. 9). O how glad they were to find the King they sought! They fell down and worshipped Him, and presented to Him their treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, for they saw in Him their King, their God and Saviour.

These “wise men” were not Jews, they were Gentiles, a name given to all people that were not Jews. Their being directed to seek Jesus was a sign that “all nations should be blessed in Him,” “the Seed of Abraham,” according to God’s promise (Gen. xxii. 18), that the time was come when He would be “found of them that sought Him not,” for by the star God had said, “Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by His name,” according to the prophecy of Isaiah (lxv. 1). This is called

“the Epiphany,” which means an “open showing” of the Saviour to the Gentiles, that they, as well as the Jews, might see, and believe, and be saved.

Now, my children, learn from this to search for Jesus yourselves. You need no star to guide you to Him who is our king—God’s Book is better than the star: it is “a lamp to our feet, and a light unto our path,” so that you may seek and find the King of heaven and earth by its shining. The Holy Spirit will help you if you wish, and when you kneel with your parents at family prayer, or by the bed side when you rise, or lay down to rest, when you labour in the field, or when you come to worship in church, you may and ought to find Jesus. It is promised that “they that seek me early shall find me” (Prov. viii. 17), and I am very sure that if you seek Him now, He will accept you as His dear children. Thank God, we know “where” He is; that He is near to comfort us in sorrow,

to help us in distress, to protect us in danger,
to preserve us from sin, and to save our souls.
Pray, therefore, "Oh Jesus, Saviour, save my
soul! Help, protect, and preserve me for Thy
name's sake. Amen."

Our Example.

LUKE ii. 40.

"The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon him."

THERE was a custom among the Jews which good parents must have felt to be a pleasant duty ; it was to bring their first-born sons to Jerusalem, and to pay a price for them to God at the temple (Num. xviii. 15, 16). It was to show the Jews that God claimed them for His own people, and that they should not be servants of sin." Jesus was thus brought to the temple, because, as "the Seed of Abraham," it

was necessary that everything should be done for Him, and by Him, according to the law. He had been circumcised the eighth day for the same reason, and nothing was wanting to "make Him like unto us in all things;" *like* in His human nature, and *like* as "under the law."

It appears to have been after this that the wise men came from the east to inquire for Him that was "born King of the Jews," though I told you about it before, because we were speaking of the things which took place at Bethlehem. Perhaps Joseph and Mary had intended to live at Bethlehem, but God warned Joseph in a dream to "take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt" (Matt. ii. 18), because Herod had determined to destroy Him. That wicked king really murdered all the children from two years old and under that were at that time in Bethlehem and in the neighbourhood, that he might be quite sure that Jesus had perished; but what could he do against God?

Joseph had already gone with the child and His mother before the soldiers drew their swords in Bethlehem, and He was safe in Egypt. Herod did not care, perhaps, that he had shed the blood of so many little ones ; but the time came when Herod must die, and what then ? Must he not appear before the judgment seat ? Every sin that he had committed would there accuse him, and the cry of the murdered children, and the tears of the weeping mothers, would tell a sad tale against him. He could not plead the blood of Christ to wipe away his sin, for he had sought to spill it, and there is nothing else for a sinner to plead, so Herod must "surely die" for ever.

Now, as long as Herod lived, Joseph stayed in Egypt with Mary and the child Jesus ; but afterwards God sent an angel to him, to bid him "go into the land of Israel." He was afraid to go back to Bethlehem, because Herod's son, Archelaus, was at that time governor in Judea ; so he went into Galilee, where Philip reigned

(not without direction from God, **Matt. ii. 22**), and he took up his abode in a small town called Nazareth, a part of the country that the Jews despised, and never thought of Messiah coming from it. But "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways his ways" (**Is. lv. 8**) ; a saying of the prophets was thus fulfilled, that He should be called a Nazarene, *i.e.* a despised and worthless person, such as Isaiah describes 700 years before (**liii. 3**), just as another saying of Hosea was fulfilled through the wicked designs of Herod, *viz.*, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." See how easily God makes His enemies do His will !

But while Jesus was dwelling there, unknown to the Jews about Him, who little thought of Him as the promised Seed and David's son, believing Him to be only the son of Joseph the carpenter, "He grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon Him."

Now, what I want to point out to you here, my children, is the *example of Jesus*. Jesus is placed before us as our pattern and example, that we are to imitate and follow. We are told to do as He did, and to have the same mind that He had (see Matt. xvi. 24 and Phil. ii. 5). If we look into the Gospel, we see Him full of love to God, and full of love to man. We find him going about to do good, and to tell people about the way of salvation. But do you think it is only for the grown-up man that we must look? Would you not like to find Jesus an example for children? Well, so He is. "He grew" as other children grew; but many children as they grow, grow in all kinds of wickedness and sin. No wonder that it should be so, for they hear that which is bad, and are quick to learn it; they see others older than themselves do wrong, and they soon do so too, for they also have a sinful heart. They love to be idle, they speak lies, they turn away from good

instruction, and so they need correction. Is this "the same mind" that was in Jesus? Is this doing as He did? No; as He grew, "He waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." So we are told to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter iii. 18).

But let us now endeavour to understand the meaning of the different expressions of the text. Pray God to write them by His Holy Spirit upon your hearts for Jesus Christ's sake.

(1). What does that mean, "He waxed strong in spirit?" Does it mean a high spirit? Had He that kind of strong spirit which mothers so often sigh over when their children say "I wont," though told to do a thing? It does not mean any such thing; but it means that whereas other children are weak in understanding, He was strong; strong too in His love to God, and all that is good. And whereas "fool-

ishness is bound up in the heart of a child," it is said of Jesus, when a child, that He was (2) "filled with wisdom." This is the second thing. Now, it is a great pleasure to be wise ; some of you take pains to learn what you are taught in school, and when you have learnt any new thing that you understand, it seems to repay all the trouble of learning. It is right that you should learn, and get all the wisdom you can ; but will the wisdom of this world make you "wise unto salvation?" Can it make you happy beyond this life? Some men are quite wrapt up in such studies as cannot profit at all unless sanctioned by the Spirit of God ; but if you knew the history of each bright star in the blue firmament, and could tell me how the sun was made ; or if you could say why the wind will blow east to-day and west to-morrow ; or if you had learnt how to gain all the world's riches, and knew all that was written in the best and rarest books, would that bring you nearer heaven? It would

leave you just where it found you, foolish and ignorant still because lacking true wisdom. The man or the child that is wise is he who is taught by God's Holy Spirit to seek salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and obtains the favour of the Lord. This is a wisdom that any of you may have ; there is none so young but he may ask God to be his teacher, and He will give you wisdom from above, and make you like the child Jesus.

(3). Further it is said, that "the grace of God was upon Him." Has not God said, "I love them that love me?" Yes ; and He shows His love to them by pouring out upon them the riches of His grace. Jesus had wisdom to understand the will of God, and grace to do it. When Saul went forth from Jerusalem to persecute the Lord's people at Damascus, he had neither divine wisdom nor divine grace, though he was a learned man, and thought he was doing God service ; but when he turned from that

way, and went about enduring so many hardships and sufferings to do the will of God, how did he do it? It was "the grace of God" which was upon him; the power was given to him. We are naturally very weak at our best, easily overcome; what must a little child be? Yet, "by the grace of God," they may glorify Him as many a Christian child has done by overcoming temptation.

But how are we to know when a child has the grace of God? As a tree is known by its fruit, so a child is known by its doings. Thus, when Jesus was twelve years old, He went up with His parents to Jerusalem. It was the feast of the Passover, a feast which God ordered the Jews to keep in remembrance of His mercy to their forefathers in Egypt, when He smote all the first-born of the Egyptians so that they died, whilst He "passed over" the children of Israel. Many people went from Nazareth to Jerusalem at this time, and after the feast they returned to

their homes. Joseph and Mary also returned, but Jesus tarried behind. They sought Him at the end of the first day's journey, and when they found Him not they returned to Jerusalem, and after three days they found Him. Where was he? Had He gone with idle companions to seek amusement? No. They found Him in the temple, *i.e.* in His father's house, sitting among the learned men, hearing, probably, what God had done for Israel in times past, and what He had promised in time to come. He also asked them questions on what He heard, and on what He read in the law and the prophets, so that all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. When Mary asked Him why He had so dealt with them? His answer is very beautiful and simple, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke ii. 48, 49.) He had to make known the salvation of God, and thus early did he seek to awaken men's

minds to seek it. But He went back with them to Nazareth, and "was subject unto them," or obedient in all things, a continual example to children and young men. And thus He grew and "increased in favour with God and man" (52).

Now, my children, you may remember that you are often disposed to be unruly and disobedient to parents ; you give trouble sometimes to your teachers, but look to Jesus as your example. You like better to play and be idle than to do God's work ; think of Jesus. And as you grow, pray to God that His "grace may be upon" you, that like Jesus you also may increase in wisdom, and in favour with God and man, for His name's sake !

The Harbinger.

MATTHEW iii. 1, 2.

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

WHAT was the subject of the last sermon that you heard? Do you remember? Did I not speak to you of Jesus as an example both to little children and young persons? Yes, that was the subject, and He is indeed such to every one; but it is very pleasing to see that God has not, even in the way of example, neglected to teach the little ones of His flock. Can you, however,

recollect in what way Jesus is pointed out to you as a pattern and example? It is written that, "as He grew, He waxed strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." We found the proof of this in His conduct as a child, for when He was twelve years of age He went up with His parents to Jerusalem, to attend the service of the temple and to keep the Passover; and so greatly did He love to hear of the things which God had done, and to ask concerning what He had promised, that He tarried in Jerusalem after Joseph and His mother had departed; and there "they found Him sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions (Luke ii. 46). Yet He had no desire to break away from the authority of His parents: He was a true servant of God; "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience," and "took upon Himself the form of a servant;" and He honoured His earthly parents by continuing "subject unto them" (51). We do not learn

anything more of the childhood of Jesus; nothing more is said concerning Him till just before He entered upon His ministry. No doubt He remained with His parents and kinsfolk, an example of good conduct and true piety to all around Him; but the time drew near that He was to show Himself openly, to preach the gospel, to call to the people of God, and to lay down His life for their salvation. Before this, however, there came a very remarkable man, whose name was John, and he began to "preach in the wilderness." Let us see, first, who and what this man was; second, what was the subject of his preaching; and, third, what argument he used, and how his preaching applies to us. Pray that God would give you His Holy Spirit for Jesus Christ's sake, to help and instruct you whilst we consider these words!

First.—Who was this John? Let us see. We read of him in the first chapter of St. Luke. He was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

His mother was a kinswoman of Mary, the mother of our Lord. He was born in a remarkable manner, for his parents were old and had no children; but they were good people and true servants of God. They had wished very much to have children, but God had not seen good to grant their desire. One day, however, when Zacharias was in the temple, and had gone into the holy place to burn incense according to the manner of worship ordered among the Jews, there appeared an angel to him, who told him that God had heard his prayer, and that his wife Elizabeth should have a son. Zacharias, though a good man, could not believe this, so he asked the angel to give him a sign to prove that it was true. Gabriel, the angel, rebuked him for his unbelief, and told him that he should be dumb for a season, which was both a sign and a punishment; for when he was sure that it was true, Zacharias would have liked to speak of what he had seen and heard, but he could not. When

he came out from the holy place to bless the people who were worshipping in the temple, he could only make them understand by signs that he had seen a vision. How sorry he must have felt when he found that he could not tell them such good news! that he could not tell every one who looked for the Seed that was to come, that his wife Elizabeth was about to have a son, who should go before and prepare the way of the Lord, by turning the hearts of the wicked from their sins, and so make them ready to welcome the Messiah! but he could not: he never spoke again till the word of the angel was fulfilled, and his son was born; and then, as his friends disputed about the name which should be given to the new-born child, he made a sign that he wished to write, and when they brought him a writing-table, he wrote, saying, His name is John. John means "grace," and His birth was a token of God's grace and favour to the world. This name had been given by the angel when he

spoke to Zacharias in the temple, to show that the covenant of grace was now to be declared to all people.

Those who studied their bibles would soon learn what was the office of John, for Isaiah, the prophet, had spoken of him eight hundred years before, as "a voice crying in the wilderness," sent to "prepare the way of the Lord" (Is. xl. 3), and St. Matthew tells us, in the third verse of the chapter from which the text is taken, that he was the person of whom Isaiah spoke. Malachi, also, who lived four hundred years after Isaiah, had said, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, to prepare the way before thee" (iii. 1). So we see that John was God's messenger, sent to make men ready for the coming of the Messiah, and he told the priests and Levites so with his own lips (John i. 23).

A few people among the Jews were in some sort prepared, by the sign of John's birth, for

the subject of his preaching, because Zachariah would be sure to tell his neighbours, when his tongue was loosed, the wonderful vision he had seen in the temple, and the words of the angel Gabriel. Those who believed him would often, therefore, look at John as one that should do great things; but, as most men cease to think about one wonder when another comes to put it out of mind, the greater part who had heard what Zacharias said had most likely ceased to think about him long before John began to preach in the wilderness "in those days," *i.e.*, in the days about which the evangelist was writing.

Secondly.—But you will want to hear, secondly, what he began to preach about. He was come as a messenger of good news, which would fill the hearts of many with joy and gladness, for he was the harbinger of Christ. Did he, then, tell the people to make merry? Did he invite them to eat and drink, and then rise up to play? Did he tell them to lay aside all care

because happy days were coming? Did he stir them up to break off the yoke of their Roman masters because the King of heaven was on His way to deliver them? Did he say that they need no longer pay taxes to Cæsar? He told them no such thing; he bade them all "Repent." What does that mean? It means that their minds and hearts should be changed; that they should "cease to do evil, and learn to do well;" that they should not do as they pleased, but do as God commanded. Some people will not do the thing they wish because they dare not; if they were not afraid that God would be angry and punish them, they would do it, although they knew it was wrong. This is not the feeling of one who repents. A true penitent is ashamed of sin; he grieves that he should have done anything against God who so loves the world, and he desires to please Him who has done such great things for us, and has promised life eternal to all that believe on Christ

Jesus. Do you ever think in this way, my children? Or do you love sin in your heart while you dare not put your hand to it? If so, you want repentance.

Thirdly.—But what, thirdly, is the argument which John uses to lead men to repent? Or how can any one, who takes the words of the Baptist, say to us, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand?" What is meant by the kingdom of heaven? It does not mean the glorious kingdom where the Lord Jesus was before the foundation of the world, but it means that kingdom which He has won by His own blood. The price had not then been paid, so the kingdom could not be said to have come, but it was "at hand," *i.e.*, the price was to be paid very soon, and they could not enter it, and would not welcome it, without repentance. Nor can we enter it *now* any better than the Jews could *then* without repentance. It is only as the subjects of His kingdom that we can be

entitled to the blessings of salvation. In the kingdoms of this world, we, who are the subjects of England, have our own laws and privileges ; we have nothing to do with the laws of France, or Italy, or Spain, or any other country ; and if any stranger wishes to share our blessings, he must come among us, and swear obedience to our sovereign. Now, something of this kind takes place among those who wish to enter the kingdom of heaven ; they renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and swear obedience to the King of kings, Jesus Christ, and they are then received among His people. Very often those who have already done this, turn away and go back to live in the midst of sin. Do they not forfeit all their privileges ? Yes ; but God says to them, "repent," turn again to me, the kingdom of heaven is open to all believers, "I will pour out my Spirit unto you." When they repent, He receives them graciously, He loves them freely, He calls them His sons and

daughters, He gives them the "kingdom of Heaven" and eternal life.

But are we not called children of God when we are baptized? Are we not taught to say in our catechism that we were made at our baptism "children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven?" Yes; but what did you profess at your baptism? What did your god-fathers and godmothers then for you? Did they not profess these three things in your name, viz., repentance, faith, obedience? The Jews were sons of Abraham, and children of God, according to the promise, and they were very angry when told to repent; but John said to them (Mat. iii. 9), "think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." There were old and there were young at the preaching of John; there were all sorts of people, rich, poor, soldiers, publicans, Pharisees, hypocrites,

and others ; but he had one word for them all, "repent;" and unless any of you, my children, can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin" (Prov. xx. 9), I say to you "repent," and I would press upon you the very same argument that John did, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," it is even come. You have great things offered there, such things as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard of," but, without repentance, you cannot enter, nor be a child of God, nor an heir of Christ. Pray, then, "O Lord, give me Thy Holy Spirit to teach me, and help me to repent, that I may enter into the kingdom of heaven, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

The Lamb.

JOHN i. 29.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

You have already heard of John the Baptist, my children; you have heard that he was the harbinger or forerunner of Christ, and that he preached to the people that they should "repent, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand." The words of the text are also John's words, and his voice was continually lifted up in the wilderness to call the people to repentance, and to believe on Him that should come, "whose shoe's

latchet he was not worthy to unloose" (27.) But though he lived away from the crowd of towns and from the strifes of men, people came out to him in great numbers to see and to hear him, for he told of things that sounded joyfully to Israel. There were men of all sorts among those who came out to him. There was the high-born Pharisee, with a great show of religion, and there was the careless Sadducee, who did not believe more than he liked of the word of God; there were the soldiers of Herod, who loved violence and fraud; and there were the publicans, or gatherers of taxes, who grasped at more than their due. Now, what did John tell them? He did not flatter with his tongue; he said to them all, "Repent," turn every one of you from your wicked ways, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was in this way that he endeavoured to "prepare the way of the Lord," by making a people ready to receive Him; for nobody with a hard heart loves Jesus, and there can be no

true welcome without true love ; so John would have them turn from their sins that they might be glad when they saw Jesus, and open their hearts to Him when the Lord whom they looked for Himself came to them.

Many people did repent, and they were baptized by John. By this they showed that they were really sorry, and wished to have their souls made clean from sin through God's pardoning grace, as the body is made clean by the washing of water. Baptism can never wash away sin ; nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ can do that, and it would be in vain for us to look for any other remedy. Some thought that John must be the promised Saviour, "the Seed of the woman," who should "bruise the head of the serpent," and they sent to him saying, "Who art thou?" (19.) But he answered plainly, "I am not the Christ" (20.) He is coming; indeed, He is even present amongst you, though you know Him not (26.)

Now, whilst these things were passing day by day Jesus himself came to be baptized. Why should He come? Had He any sins to be sorry for? No; but He came, an example of humility; and, when the Baptist saw Him, he knew Him at once to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Let us now inquire, *first*, how John knew Jesus? *secondly*, what is the meaning of the expression, "the Lamb of God?" and *thirdly*, how He "taketh away the sins of the world?" Pray that God would give you His holy Spirit for Jesus Christ's sake to teach you.

First.—How did John know Jesus? He was a kinsman according to the flesh. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was cousin to Elizabeth, and went to visit her in "the hill country of Judea" (Luke i. 39) soon after the angel had told her that Jesus should be born of her. But John was brought up far away from Jesus, who, you remember, was born in Bethlehem, was car-

ried into Egypt, and then dwelt in Nazareth which was in Galilee. Thus, though they were kinsmen, they had never met; but it had been revealed to John that, "upon whom he should see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (33). And so it was that the Holy Spirit came down, and rested as it were a dove upon Jesus when He was baptized, and a voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 16, 17). This is very important for you to observe, my dear children, because you have here a witness to a great truth which we are taught in the Bible. What do I mean? It is the doctrine of the Trinity, that is, that there are Three Persons in one God. The voice of the Father is heard from Heaven, the Spirit of God is seen resting on Jesus, and the Lord himself is there, having taken on Himself the nature of man, that He might fulfil the great work of our

Redemption. Do you remember that I spoke to you about this in one of the sermons on the first chapter of Genesis? I think it was on that text in which it is said, "Let us make man in our image." The knowledge of this truth will help you very much, my children, to a right understanding of the Scriptures.

Secondly.—But, secondly, why should John speak of Jesus as "the Lamb of God?" Why does He not say at once, "Behold the Son of God!" would it not gain Him more respect? or, "Behold the promised Seed!" would it not command more attention? I think it was because God would teach men from the very beginning what was the nature of that work which Jesus came to perform, viz., that He had come to die for us. God does not always tell us things as plainly as we tell one another, but He tells us quite as plainly as it is wanted, if we will be humble enough to ask for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and will search into the Scriptures. Now,

if we examine the Scriptures concerning this expression, "the Lamb of God," we shall find a good reason for this name being given to Jesus. The prophets speak of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ sometimes as a glorious coming, when all the kingdoms of the world shall be subject to Him, and the nations shall flow to Jerusalem to worship Him, as rivers flow to the sea ; a coming we are yet to expect. Then, again, they speak of the coming of Jesus as one of little note. They tell us He should be "despised and rejected of men ;" that He should be mocked and smitten ; that He should be looked on as "a worm and no man ;" that He should be "led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb," so He should not "open his mouth" to complain of those who misused him. The Jews were most pleased to think of the glory of the Redeemer : they expected at His coming to be raised up above all nations. But that time was not yet ; it will be hereafter. At

this time it would seem as if God would draw away men's minds from the glory of Christ to the humiliation of Jesus, by putting into the lips of His messenger this word, "Behold the Lamb of God."

To you, perhaps, my children, that word does not seem so full of meaning as it did to the Jews to whom John the Baptist spoke. You see the lambs in the spring time frisking in the green pastures, full of life, and happiness, and innocence. But who can tell the deep sorrows of Jesus? He grieved for the sins of the world! You do not see, therefore, why He should be called "the Lamb of God." The Jews, however, would understand it in a very different sense, for the Lamb was a sacrifice which God had ordered to be slain every morning and every evening at the temple, and also upon other occasions. You do not know what I mean by a sacrifice, do you? I will tell you. A sacrifice means an offering made to God upon His altar. Sacrifices

were appointed by God for various reasons in the law of Moses. The lamb which was to be sacrificed was brought to the temple, and the priest, or person who offered it, laid his hand upon the head, and then confessed his sins. The lamb was then slain and burnt upon the altar ; the sin which was confessed in faith and sorrow was by the grace of God taken from the man and laid upon the Son of God, of whom the lamb was a type ; the man was pardoned, the victim slain, because it bore his guilt. These things happened every day in the year among the Jews, so that every child must have known about them who had been in the temple at Jerusalem. Thus, when John spoke of "the Lamb of God," all the people would understand that he pointed to Jesus as the appointed sacrifice of God.

Thirdly.—It is, however, said, thirdly, that He "taketh away the sins of the world." Do you think that the blood of those animals could wash out the sin of the soul? It was never meant

that any one should trust in them. The sacrifices were ordained by God that men might keep in mind the need in which they stood of pardon; that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins (Heb. ix. 22). Nor was that all: they were intended to point out to us the promised One who should come to destroy both the author of sin, *i.e.* the serpent, and his works. What a hope was that, my children! what a sweet, blessed, glorious promise was set before the believer in Israel! How must the Jew have rejoiced in hope, whilst humbled and ashamed he saw in the bleeding lamb a picture of the death he deserved for sin, for "the wages of sin is death," but heard through faith in the promise a voice which said, "there is a Lamb whose blood cleanseth from all sin," and therefore "God gives eternal life" (Rom. vi. 23). So when John proclaimed Jesus to be "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," those who looked for a Saviour would not un-

derstand it of the glory of Christ, but of His sacrifice; and if the people had been led by John, instead of despising and rejecting Jesus as they afterwards did, they would have received Him with welcome, and believed on Him to the salvation of their souls. For He is "the Lamb;" the sacrifice foreshown by all the other sacrifices of the law of Moses; the one sacrifice that takes away sin, and so makes peace for us with God.

But, my children, if the Jews had need of a sacrifice to take away sin, have not we? Have you no sin? There is not a child howsoever little that is without sin. You can remember doing what you ought not to have done; was not that sin? Yes. Then you want a sacrifice. Where will you get it? A lamb from the flock would not be of any use to you—you cannot offer one; but God has provided Himself a Lamb, which has been offered for you and for me. This Lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world "to seek and to save that which was

lost;" the same of whom the Baptist spoke when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Believe on Him as come for this purpose, and you shall have pardon for your sins, salvation for your souls.

The Vain Assault.

MATT. iv. 11.

"Then the devil leaveth him."

CAN you carry your thoughts back, my dear children, to the things which were spoken to you at the first? Think a little of the happy days of the garden of Eden, and the cause of man's ruin, because we are now entering upon the history of Him who has restored to us the joy that was then lost. He is the very "seed" promised to the fallen parents of mankind, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.

Who was it? It was "Jesus of Nazareth."

Did you think I should tell you of some new person that you had not heard of before? True, I have already spoken of Him, and I have only to speak to you of Him. The whole Bible speaks to us of Jesus, and our hope is in Him. Of whom else, then, should we preach? We can never say enough of His goodness, nor of His glory. If so be that you are of that happy number who are brought to the kingdom of heaven, you will speak for ever of His mighty deeds, will tell of the great things He has done for your souls, and join in songs of praise to Him who saved you; nor will you ever tire of work so sweet as that.

You will, perhaps, remember that I told you this same Jesus is sometimes called the *second* Adam, whilst the man who dwelt in Paradise is spoken of as the *first* Adam. The one is the author of our spiritual life, the other of our natural life. The first Adam was a type of the second. What is meant by "a type?" A type

is a person, or a thing that was a figure of Christ before He came. In what way, then, was Adam a figure of Christ? They are both, in one sense, the authors of life to man, and they are both heads of a covenant made by God with each in man's behalf.

You remember what Adam's covenant was : it was a covenant of works. Life was promised to obedience ; but "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." We know he ate, and died ; for the devil, as we have seen, came to Eve and tempted her, so that she ate, and she afterwards gave of the fruit to Adam, who also ate, and thus broke his covenant with God. From that moment Satan gained a great advantage over men, and never failed to draw them out of the right way. Made bold by success, the wicked one triumphed ; he had already made one a sinner who was without sin, and so seemed to defeat the purpose of God ; he now comes with the same object to the second Adam,

that he might call the world his own, and reign where God could not.

But let us look at the account that is given us in Scripture—first, of the temptation, and, secondly, of his defeat. Pray God to give you His Spirit to enable you to understand what may be said, and to profit by it for Jesus Christ's sake!

First.—After the baptism of Jesus, He was “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil”* (Matt. iv. 1). He was there alone; at least, no man was with Him; and He was preparing for the great work on which He was about to enter by long fasting and prayer. After forty days and forty nights “He was an hungered.” It was then that the tempter drew nigh. He seems to have had a knowledge that this was Messiah, and yet he

* This took place before the declaration of the Baptist, “Behold,” &c., but the arrangement of the subjects made it convenient to reverse their order.

saw that He was man ; why should he not prevail ? Doubtless He wished to be received and acknowledged as " Messiah ; " let Him, therefore, give proof of His power as the " anointed Son of God." How could He so well prove it as by working miracles ? Now, He was hungry, unknown, and poor ; so on these three points the devil determined to tempt Jesus. First, he would have Him change the stones into bread to supply His present want ; but Jesus would not mistrust the providence of God, and, though He could multiply bread for others, He would not make use of such power to serve His own appetite. So He answered, " It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God " (4).

Next, he tempted Him to throw Himself from the top of the temple, that, when all the people of Jerusalem saw Him unhurt, they might conclude that He was come down from God, and believe. But though it is true that God had

promised to "give his angels charge over him, to *keep him in all his ways*, to bear him up in their hands, lest he should dash his foot against a stone;" it was not less true that it was promised, "Thou shalt tread upon the *lion* and the *adder*; the young lion and the *dragon* shalt Thou trample under feet" (Ps. xci. 11-13). And this very promise was fulfilled when the Lord said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;" and if we would be kept safe by God, we must not put ourselves into danger.

Once more he tries: "he taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Jesus was poor, and had come to establish a kingdom; what an opportunity for stirring up his ambition to grasp all these! What man could be proof when the smooth-tongued liar says, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me?"

(Matt. iv. 9.) When we remember by what a little thing the first Adam fell, we should have thought it impossible to resist so great an offer. Our hope of redemption hangs upon the answer of Jesus : does He yield ? does He say yes ?

Secondly.—Rejoice, my children, that where the first Adam fell, the second Adam triumphed; that where the serpent deceived, the devil was defeated. What was the answer of Jesus ? “Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (10). It was the last open effort of the great enemy, for as we read, “Then the devil leaveth him ;” and we read no more of his coming to Him. He stirred up others against Him ; he entered the heart of Judas to betray Him ; he maddened the people against Him even to the death ; but Jesus neither “failed” nor was He “discouraged.” “In all points He was tempted even as we are.” In what was the difference between Him and other

men? He was "without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). This made Jesus a perfect sacrifice for us; He could not be made to do what God has said to every man "Thou shalt not do." Many people think in themselves, "I may just do this, or that; there can be no great harm; it is such a little thing;" but Jesus did not argue in this way; He would do nothing, great or small, that was not right, and he bore all our infirmities without a murmur or complaint.

Do you see anything, my children, in the manner of this defeat for us to follow? Do not all the Lord's answers begin, "It is written?" Where is it written? In "the book," the word of God. So you will find that the best way to answer temptation is to follow that which is "written." In His book all God's commandments are written; and if, like young Timothy, it may be said of you that "from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith

which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15), you will easily find many reasons against sin, and many a weapon against Satan. You will see in them how good is God, how deep His love, and what a full salvation He has provided for you; that He invites you to come to Him, and find your happiness in serving Him here and dwelling with Him hereafter. They will show you, also, some of the sorrows of sin, and will tell you of its punishment. They speak of everlasting chains in darkness, a lake of fire, the pains and torments of those who will not call on the name of the Lord. You would not like, I am sure, to be among those poor souls who cannot get so much as a drop of water to cool their burning lips, and cannot have a hope that they shall ever have a ray of comfort or one pain the less!

Sometimes, my children, when people have been long sick, and lie in pain upon their beds, they long to die. It is, indeed, a happy thing

to die when we have a good hope of entering into heaven. It is even far better, for "it is written," "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours" (Rev. xiv. 13). They *rest*; they have *peace, joy, life, glory*, and the presence of their Redeemer, to crown their happiness. But if they have not "lived" in the Lord, can they "die" in Him? If they have not walked in His steps, can they follow where He now is? Will death bring any gain to them? Will they find it rest? Will it carry them to heaven? No, they need not wish; they seldom dare to die, because they know that they must enter into that place "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 48).

Then, my children, what must you do? If you are tempted, will you yield? "It is written," "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James iv. 7). There is your victory promised, his defeat determined. Strengthen your-

selves by the "written" word of God and prayer. Ask much and often for the holy Spirit to help you for Jesus Christ's sake, for "without him you can do nothing" (John xv. 5), but you may "do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you" (Phil. iv. 13). And all the help you need is promised in the faithful word of God (Luke xi. 13). Give me, then, the hope that you will do this, that you may be delivered in the hour of temptation; then all the good things of heaven will be yours, and nothing shall ever be able to separate you from the Lord's love, or hinder you from entering into His glory.

The Call.

1 JOHN i. 43.

"Follow Me."

WHAT *simple* words are these ! They are words that may be used any day between you and your companions ; but, when you consider from whose lips they come, you will say with me, what *gracious* words are these ! Our companions may wish us to follow them in the way of evil, so that we may hesitate whether to obey them ; or we may have other things to do, so that we may not choose to go where they go ; but the invitations of Christ are not such as we can say "no"

to. If we do not *like* to do as He says, still we *must* do it, and, therefore, other companions and other ways must be forsaken when Jesus says "Follow Me."

Do you ask by what authority He claims our obedience? Is it not of Him that the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him?" (Mat. xvii. 7.) Surely, then, we not only *may* but we *must* accept His invitation and command to "follow" Him. Let us, however, *first*, see on what occasion our Lord thus spoke, and, *secondly*, inquire how we can follow Him. Ask God to give you His holy Spirit for Jesus's sake, that you may be enabled to "follow" Him.

First.—As to the occasion. You remember, I hope, that last Sunday we had some account of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, the vain assault of Satan on the Son of God; then it was that Jesus began to make ready for the great work of winning souls for heaven. The

Light began to shine in the midst of darkness, and the father of wickedness tried in vain to put out the Light. He tempted Jesus to distrust the goodness of God ; he tried, by the deceitfulness of riches, by vain-glory and worldly honour, to make Him fall ; but Jesus did not yield, He overcame him, so that Satan "departed from him for a season." Then angels came and ministered unto Him ; they comforted and strengthened Him, so that He was prepared to enter upon the work of the ministry. It was after this that He passed by the place where John was preaching and baptizing, and this faithful messenger of God pointed Him out to his followers as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Andrew and another of John's disciples heard this word, and being desirous of knowing more of Him they followed Jesus to His home, and abode with Him. Afterwards Andrew went and told Peter that they had "found the Messiah," and

"brought him to Jesus." The next day Jesus findeth Philip, and saith unto him, "Follow me."

These two little words are very important, my children, and very necessary to remember; let them sound in your ears when you sit down, and when you rise up; when you go forth from your chamber, and when you lie upon your bed; they are the sum of all religion, for they show us the faith and duty of the Christian. Then, you think religion is a thing soon learnt, if it is wrapt up in the two words "Follow me." Yes! we may soon learn what it is, but it is not so soon practised; for, instead of doing what is said, we are too often thinking of this thing or that, by which we are hindered from following Christ.

Secondly.—But let us inquire, secondly, how we are to follow Him. Well, then, my children, it is not as one man follows another, but as the blind, lost, perishing sinner should follow the Lord and Saviour. He commands us as the

Son of God, He invites us as the promised Messiah, He claims our affections as the Seed of the Woman, our faith as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." We are taught in "the Book" to expect such an one as this, and if any came and said, "I am he," he must prove it; or, if another should say, "Lo! here is Christ, or lo! there is Christ," we should expect a reason for believing. Now, John the Baptist was inspired by God, and, as the harbinger of Christ, he particularly said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world;" it was revealed to him that Jesus was the Christ. The Father, also, expressly declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son." We have seen that He was born of a woman, the Virgin Mary. Did He ever say of himself, "I am he?" When the woman of Samaria talked with the weary traveller who sat by Jacob's well, she said, "when Messiah cometh, which is called Christ, He will tell us all things, Jesus

saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (John iv. 25, 26). And besides these testimonies, we see with our own eyes that the things which Moses and the prophets did write concerning Him were fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, so that we can have no excuse for not following him. The more we read the holy Scriptures, and are instructed in them by the Spirit of God, the more we shall see that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12); and the more ready we shall be with Philip to obey His call and "follow" Jesus. If you know anything of the wickedness of the heart, and what every sinner deserves because of sin, you will be very anxious to find a Saviour; and if you have learnt that Jesus has power to save from death, from judgment, and from hell, you will be ready to "follow" Him in faith.

But to believe that He is all that the prophets

said, and all that the sinner needs, is that sufficient? Must we think that nothing more is meant by "following Christ?" Philip went after Him, and so in a manner must we. Shall I tell you how, my children? It is to *do* what Jesus did, and not to do what sinners do. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. ii. 22); but they "provoke God to anger with their sins" (1 Kings xvi. 2). We must, then, take Christ for our example if we would "follow" Him. There must be in us "the same mind that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). His heart was love, the breathings of His soul were to heaven. To us also it is commanded saying, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. xxii. 37). Then how great was His love to man! He came from the glories of heaven "to seek and to save that which was lost." He became man for this purpose, and went about doing good, and at last "humbled himself even

to the death of the cross" for our sakes. But can little children do this? You are not asked to do it; but you are told, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (39), and in so doing you will "follow" Jesus. He indeed loved us more than He loved himself, and He proved it in every way; but there are few men who love their neighbour so much as themselves; few whose love to themselves is so small as their love to others. Still, if we would "follow" Jesus, we must "deny ourselves," and endeavour to do good. True, we cannot heal the sick by a word, nor make blind people see, nor lame people walk upright, but let it be said of us, "they have done what they could," and we shall be followers of Christ. Even little children may do acts of kindness, and "love one another;" little children may be obedient to parents, and do what they have to do without saying "no," or "I won't," and without being told twice that you are to do it; and thus little children may "follow" Jesus.

Then, see what He did not do. He did not follow the multitude to do evil; He was not led away by the bad example of others; He did not use bad words; He did not do any wicked thing; He did not dishonour God; He was not covetous; He was not proud; He did not forsake the temple; He did not seek his own will and pleasure. If He was angry, it was not because of injury, but because of sin. He wept for it; He died for it. Now, you may "follow" Him in being humble, gentle, meek, kind, forgiving, speaking the truth at all times, and angry only at sin, and that chiefly in your own hearts. I might mention many other things to you, perhaps, my children, but remember the object of Jesus—He came to "save sinners." Can we follow Him in that? Can we save? No; but we may bring others to share in His salvation. See what Philip did. When He began to follow the Lord, he went and found Nathaniel, and told him, "We have found the Christ!"

and when Nathaniel asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" his only answer was, "Come and see" (45, 46). So you and I must try, if we would follow Christ, to bring others to Him, that our friends may share with us in the blessings of His salvation.

Thus you see, my children, these two little words do, indeed, contain the sum of religion; it is, in fact, the one way of life.

But I must say a few words to you in parting, for the long days are past, and we cannot continue these lectures. I can see that you have listened to them, but something more is necessary than hearing. Look at Eze. xxxiii. 32, and you will understand what I mean. Can you say, then, that you have gained any good since you began to listen to these children's sermons? have you thought more about your souls? have you learnt to care more for the name of Jesus? have you asked for the gift of His holy Spirit? have you been more obe-

dient, more kind, more like Christ? You have heard of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; have you been more sorry for it in yourselves? You have seen how Satan tempted the first Adam who fell; for he did not resist the devil. You have also seen how he tempted the second Adam who triumphed over him; and you know which is our example. My children, if you desire to learn, you will give heed to the things which you have heard, and will not let them slip; and heartily do I pray for you that you may not follow in the ways of sin, but rather that you may "follow" Jesus, who has himself called you. Remember that He has gained heaven, and is there entered for *us*, so that if you indeed follow Him here, you will have the happiness to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" in glory (Rev. xiv. 4). Pray, then, "O God, give me Thy holy Spirit to enable me to 'follow' the Lord Jesus Christ, for his name's sake! Amen."

THE END.

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